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Painted by John Wool.

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PICTURES
OF
PRIVATE LIFE.

Third Series.

BY

SARAH STICKNEY.

"Would you judge of the lawfulness or unlawfulness of pleasure, take this rule: whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes off the relish of spiritual things;—in short, whatever increases the strength and authority of your body over your mind, that thing is sin to you, however innocent it may be in itself."

LONDON:
SMITH, ELDER AND CO., CORNHILL.
BOOKSELLERS TO THEIR MAJESTIES.

1837.

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LONDON :

PRINTED BY STEWART AND CO.

OLD BAILEY.

TO MY FATHER,

THIS Volume is respectfully, and affectionately dedicated; not only because I feel that to him I owe much of that solicitude for the happiness of the human family, which prompts me to employ such abilities as I have been gifted with, in endeavouring to point out how good may be substituted for evil; but because I believe that, amongst many friends, my father is the one who will most rejoice, if what I write should be found conducive to any useful, or benevolent purpose.

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P R E F A C E.

GLADLY would the author of this volume have offered to the public, in a few serious pages, without the embellishment of fiction, or the superfluity of extraneous matter, her sentiments on the education of the middle classes of females in Great Britain; but the frequent assertion that essays are not popular, added to the belief that such pages would never find their way into the circles where *Pretension* is most prevalent, have in-

duced me again to weave into a story, many grave and important truths connected with the temporal and eternal happiness of mankind.

It is, however, to the attention of my own sex, that I would *most* earnestly recommend these truths. It is to woman that I would appeal, to look into the evidence of her own heart, to examine the result of her own experience, and to ask of the secret counsels of her own bosom, whether her dignity, her usefulness, and her peace of mind are not sacrificed by that system of education, which substitutes the artificial for the real, the glittering for the substantial, and the ornamental for the good,—whether the subjects to which her time and her talents are now almost exclusively devoted are calculated to prepare her for being a help to the feeble, a guide to the erring, and a friend to the distressed; or whether they are not rather such as render her merely an object of interest and admiration

to those who have taste to enjoy, and leisure to commend?—whether she is treasuring up for seasons of sickness, sorrow, and suffering, a store of kind feelings, and disinterested thoughts, and practical usefulness, to be ready for the service of those whose happiness is committed to her care; or whether she is expecting that the information acquired in the routine of school learning will supply the necessities of penury, and disease, and that the music of her lyre will charm away the anguish of a soul trembling under the sentence of spiritual death?

It is to woman, then, that I would offer my earnest request for her candid and serious attention to what I have written, not for the sake of the story, the heroine, or the fanciful scenes and characters by which I have endeavoured to beguile her into the perusal of my volume; but that she may be induced to make the solemn inquiry of her own heart,

whether, with all her attainments, she has got understanding; and whether there is not, beyond the learning she has acquired, a Wisdom whose ways are ways of pleasantness, and whose paths are peace.

Ridgmont, 3rd March, 1837.

PRETENSION.

PRETENSION.



CHAPTER I.

A LETTER for Peter Bell, Esq. at the post office of the market-town he was accustomed to frequent once every week, was an event of such importance, that the worthy farmer stood still with his riding-whip held fast between his knees, while he took out his well-worn pocket-knife, with which he cut carefully round the seal; and, despite the jostling of innumerable passers by, began the difficult task of decyphering his sister's hand-writing. At first sight, the fair page before him presented nothing but a regular succession of oblique angles, for the writer had been taught by one of those magicians who profess to convert the worst hand into the best, in the course of three lessons. Finding, however, from a protracted and studious examination of the first few lines, that nothing very calamitous was

likely to be announced, the letter was again folded up, and preserved for the evening reading of Peter Bell and his wife, Martha. Nor was it long before he led his horse out of the inn-yard, and rode soberly out of the town, musing as he went, upon the state of the markets, the roads, the weather, and more than once upon that important epithet *esquire*, which his sister, without any reason intelligible to him, was so fond of affixing to his name. It is true, she alleged in excuse, the peculiar nature of her circumstances, for she was, or ought to have been, *humble* companion to a lady whose rank and influence in society were many degrees above her own ; it is true, she had stated to her brother many times the impossibility of allowing Mrs. Montague's servant to carry to the post a letter in her own hand-writing, directed to plain *Mr.* Bell ; yet, notwithstanding all she could say, and that was a great deal, her brother remained unconvinced of his own right to the title ; and therefore he turned his thoughts away from the subject, determined not to condemn what he was still unable to approve.

If, however, the perceptions of the farmer were too obtuse to admit of his being fully initiated into what his sister called the *proprieties of life* ; all the faculties of his mind were alive to the fact, that farming was at this precise era of our national history, a thriving business,—that he had taken excellent samples of corn to market that day, had

sold well, and was returning home with more money in his pocket than he should wish to have it known he had about him.

Cheered by this secret consciousness, he spurred his horse out of the regular and tardy pace it had acquired in the honourable office of supporting the weight of Mrs. Bell, conjointly with that of her wedded lord; and it is more than probable the sober beast might have waited for a second application of this unwonted stimulus, had it not heard in the distance, thundering over the hill just left behind, a loud and rapid trot that for a few moments inspired both horse and rider with an evident desire of competition. But before this desire, so naturally awakened by anything dashing past us, either mentally or corporeally, was roused into action, all hope of success was laid in the dust; for close along-side of the farmer, and pulling up with a sudden effort that made the stones fly to right and left, appeared a spruce gentleman mounted on a sleek and well-fed charger, that seemed not only to spurn the vulgar companionship of the farmer and his horse, but the very ground on which his own nimble feet were treading.

Peter Bell was a thoughtful and observant man, who, without committing himself in conversation, liked extremely well to hear what other people had to say; and when the stranger, whom he knew by name and character, remarked upon the weather,

and the common topics of the day, he checked his bridle rein, and fell into his accustomed dodging pace, for the purpose of ascertaining what sort of a companion Mr. Fynch, of Glossom, really was.

The state of the markets was, of course, the prevailing topic of conversation, and Peter observed with complacency, that his fellow-traveller knew something of business.

"You are early from town to-day," said the farmer.

The gentleman drew nearer, and remarked, in a low, but emphatic voice, that circumstanced as he was, it would scarcely be prudent to be loitering on the road.

"A man of substance, too," thought Peter, and his respect increased in the usual ratio.

The conversation now turned upon money matters, and as both travellers had to ride many miles on the same road, they remained in company, growing more and more interested in each other; nor was it until the substantial white gate at the entrance of Peter Bell's farm appeared distinctly through the twilight, that he wished his companion good night, and rode slowly down the bridle road which led across the fields, to where the light from his own parlour window might be seen glimmering through the trees of the orchard.

Martha Bell was a woman of quick perceptions, and never did the step of her husband's horse

arrive at the remotest point of hearing, when she did not arise and bestir herself with all the alacrity of a faithful wife, to rouse the slumbering embers of the fire into a brisk and cheerful blaze, set on the humming-kettle, and prepare that welcome meal, over which the farmer and his industrious helpmate were wont to discuss the topics of the market-day, with as much earnestness and interest, as if the return of the husband had been from a journey to the metropolis, or his absence one of months, instead of hours.

The person and character of Martha Bell, were such as to require little description, in order to make them easily pictured to the imagination, or clearly understood. Perhaps her greatest charm was a relative one, consisting of her perfect adaptation to her husband, in his appearance, habits, and worldly circumstances.

By adaptation, we do not mean resemblance, for in married life the two words are seldom synonymous ; but rather that capability in each party to supply the deficiencies of the other, which, in spite of all individual defects, renders them perfect in their union, and fitted as a whole for the place they are destined to fill in the world. There were, however, some points in which they did strongly resemble each other. They were both important in the scale of specific gravity,—both cheerful, upright, and benevolent ; though the cheerfulness of Peter Bell was of a silent inward kind, that went

no farther than to diffuse a placid smile over his countenance when he looked with evident satisfaction upon the mirth of others ; while that of his wife was not to be restrained from many a hearty laugh, as joyous and genuine as ever burst from the lips of childhood.

The uprightness of both parties was unquestionable. Perhaps it had never been very severely put to the test ; but while Mrs. Bell was loud and severe in her defence of unflinching integrity, it was much more easy to conceive of her husband than herself, that under any of those searching dispensations, which place a man's uprightness in opposition to his worldly aggrandizement, he would suffer in silence, and to death.

In benevolence, however, the worthy woman was not to be outdone ; for, while her husband, slow in all his movements, whether of mind or body, pondered upon the degree of necessity, and the best means of relief, his wife was accustomed to act upon her own notions of both, and risk the consequences ; for she held strictly and perseveringly to the true principle of charity, so seldom maintained even by minds superior to her own, that it is better to be twenty times deceived, than that one real sufferer should be denied even the means of immediate relief at the door of plenty.

On the evening above described, Martha Bell thought her husband spent a longer time than usual in disposing of his horse, and walking leisurely

round his stacks and homesteads, as he was accustomed to do, after every temporary absence ; and when, after meeting her cordial welcome at the parlour door, he stood in his wonted passive manner within the glow of his own hearth, while her ready hands stripped off his great coat, and the thick shawl she had charged him to tie around his neck, there was an indifference in his looks and in the tone of his voice, that betokened mental absence from the surrounding scene.

Now, indifference was the thing of all others, that Martha Bell was least calculated to brook. She had protested before their marriage, that she would not bear it, at a time when her youth, her bright dark eyes, and blooming countenance, rendered all her protestations delightful to her lover's ear ; and she had subsequently supported her determination by a vigilance of scrutiny that scarcely left the good man possession of his own thoughts.

" Now something has happened to you, Peter Bell," said she, seating herself on a chair beside him, with her hand placed upon his knee, and her piercing eyes fixed intently upon his face.

The farmer smiled, and for one moment she was satisfied ; but again her conjugal persecutions began with renewed energy.

" I want my tea," said Peter Bell, once more attempting to smile away her curiosity.

" Not one drop shall you have," replied Martha, " until you have told me what it is that makes you

sit gazing at the fire like a man in a dream, and asking me three times what I say, before you can understand me."

Peter Bell knew by experience there was no resisting the importunity of his wife, and before the refreshing meal to which he sat down was concluded, he had told her all, beginning with the important fact, that the spruce gentleman, his late companion on the road, was Mr. Fynch, of Glossom, the acting partner in a manufactory just established, at the distance of four miles from the farm occupied by this worthy couple; and concluding with a fact of still greater importance, that he had, in consequence of an hour's confidential conversation with this gentleman, pretty nearly concluded to invest his surplus gains in their flourishing concern.

"But I thought we were to have built another parlour, and made a fish pond, and kept a pony," said the wife, who, in her secret visions, had even seen herself sheltered by the protecting head of a one-horse chaise, and who now beheld these visions giving place to what appeared to her a much less substantial good.

"And so we were," replied her husband, "and so I trust we shall yet." And then he went on to describe how such additional expenses would not only ill become a mere farmer, like him, but might conduce to his own disadvantage, by affording his landlord a plea for advancing his rent; whereas, if he embarked in another and a more lucrative

concern, his landlord might please himself, and they should be independent of him.

Martha was convinced,—at all events she was satisfied to wait a year longer for the one-horse chaise, and they both sat musing together upon the novel aspect of their affairs, when the farmer suddenly remembered the letter, still folded in his pocket.

It was a good evening's work to decypher its contents, though each line contained, on an average, only three words. Their conclusions at last, however, were pretty certain, that Miss Bell, the only distinguished member of her family, was about to pay a visit at Waterton farm, an event which always threw the mistress of the house into a sea of troubles, about the ways and means of casting an air of gentility over her domestic affairs.

As Dinah (alias Diana) Bell is an individual to whom we beg to direct the attention of the reader, it may not be out of place to give a slight sketch of her character, before we proceed to the circumstances by which her visit was commemorated.

This important individual, was one of those who, at a very early age, grow dissatisfied with the distinction of a quaint or homely name, and having about the same time discovered the resemblance between Dinah and Diana, and being also a young lady of extensive correspondence, she assumed the latter cognomen as being not only more classical, but more adapted to the character she intended to

assume. Upon her brother Peter, also, she would willingly have practised the same art of translating the common-place into the poetical, but nothing she could say or do was ever able to persuade him, that his own respectable name could reasonably or justifiably be converted into Petrarch; and even when his second sister underwent the process of enchantment, he persisted in declaring that the Christian name of Jane was to all intents and purposes as honourable as that of his father's old cow Janette, which, in compliance with the commanding genius of Diana, her meek-spirited sister had consented to assume.

These, however, were but the absurdities of youth, such as the world, with its free schooling, is well disposed, and well calculated to correct; and as Miss Bell was not without a tolerable share of penetration, and common sense, she soon learned, that to escape ridicule, was a more important aim than to establish a character for sentimental refinement. But with this knowledge, acquired in her intercourse with the world, came the wide prospect of other fields in which her ingenuity might find exercise; and though as she advanced in years, the assumptions of Diana Bell became less eccentric, and less obvious to the critic's eye, she continued most successfully to support her title to pretension. She became, in short, one of a class—of that numerous class whose indefatigable strife is to reconcile the two extremes of poverty and ostentation, of ignorance and pedantry, of

meanness and majesty. Not that the character in question could justly be taxed with any want of integrity or benevolence ; but it is impossible to describe by any other word than *mean*, those innumerable shifts by which imperative necessity, not in itself disgraceful, is endeavoured to be concealed.

Diana Bell, for instance, could travel on the outside of a coach, when pretty sure of not having to descend at a gentleman's door ; and if detected by an acquaintance of any considerable standing in the world, would complain of dyspepsia, and lament the impossibility of taking an inside place. She would purchase a cheap garment with the most laudable regard to economy, and yet apologize for the act by calling it an experiment, a mere freak of fancy, not likely to be repeated, though every one acquainted with the interior of her wardrobe, knew it to be but the continuation of a habit adopted in early childhood, and prolonged by necessity through every day of her life. Lastly, she could inquire for a situation, disclaiming at the same time all acquaintance with her father's circumstances, all sense of duty—in short, all rational and just grounds for such a step ; and acknowledge in her own defence nothing but a peculiar tone and temperament of mind, which rendered it impossible for her to mix with the coarser spirits by whom her father's hearth was surrounded.

But above all other pretensions, that of a claim to a liberal education, was the most difficult for

Diana Bell to support; for she was none of your half pretenders, climbing the ladder of distinction at one step, and falling at the next. Quick-sighted, ingenious, and facile in the art of adaptation, our pretender concealed her ignorance so skilfully, that many people thought her an accomplished woman, and some a genius.

The young reader, learned in all the verbosity of modern education, and judging, perhaps, by her own practice and experience, will think this no great attainment; but let it be remembered, that the era of which we write, was one in which females of the middle classes were taught nothing but the use of their mother-tongue, with such other simple and substantial branches of scholastic education, as might enable them to act the part of farmers' wives, or tradesmen's daughters, with credit to themselves, and advantage to the community at large.

Judge, then, what must have been the blank ignorance of the being we have described, when, as companion to Mrs. Montague, she first entered a circle of society, where French phrases, and French fashions, were as familiar as those of her native land; where none but Italian music was tolerated; and where the very grand-children of her patroness, little boys and girls who could but lisp their lessons, presented flowers under their botanical names, and were prepared to give the derivation of every word they uttered.

It was impossible to live in such a school without

learning something, and the humble companion did learn the names of a few celebrated composers of music; she did learn, by constant observation, the use and application of that invaluable word *naïveté*; and she had pronounced it, tremblingly, it is true, yet with tolerable precision, though what it had cost her, in searching through the dictionary to ascertain its precise meaning, we decline to tell.

The progress which Diana made in the second year of her noviciate was surprising even to herself; for now, from assiduous attention to the Latin master in his morning lessons, she could, with a most potent and sage expression of earnest inquiry, pronounce the words *unde derivatur* to the younger children; and finding them always productive of a certain kind of reply, she grew so venturesome, that once as she stood with a party by the side of a smooth piece of water, listening with astonishment to the mysterious notes of a flute in the adjoining wood, she applied this learned question to the sound, and the novel mode of using it went off so well, that she was regarded not only as a wit, but a scholar.

An unexpected triumph not unfrequently excites temerity. With the word *unique*, Diana was not quite so fortunate. Having observed that all who described enchanting scenery, after enumerating every excellence, invariably concluded by these words, “in short, it was unique”—she drew her own conclusions, and acted upon them somewhat pre-

maturely; for in this instance she had neglected to search the dictionary; and one day, when the youngest Montague asked her the meaning of the word, she answered in accordance with her own conceptions, "perfectly beautiful, my dear."

"Perfectly what?" said a boy of ten years old, looking up contemptuously from his Ovid.

"Perfectly beautiful," replied the child, and the school-room rung with laughter.

It was some time before Diana recovered from this blow, but she did recover, as usual, to reap fresh wisdom from the temporary fall, which taught her to conduct herself with greater caution than ever, and thus to ward off the danger of such mal-occurrences in future. From failures of a similar kind, she learned many arts of infinite importance in the school of pretension; such as, when addressed with a question in a foreign language, to be immediately occupied with something either in or out of the room, so that it seemed impossible she could have heard; and on such occasions it not unfrequently happened that one of the children was in danger of falling,—that an apparition of something startling passed the window,—or whatever did really occur, that her attention was preoccupied, and her ignorance concealed.

Reading aloud was certainly a painful trial to her presence of mind, but even here she could act her part with tolerable success. Most words requiring a foreign pronunciation, being conveniently printed

in italics, she could by seeing her enemy in the distance, prepare for the danger, and arrange her means of defence; for either she guessed the meaning, and gave her own interpretation in English, or if taken by surprise, she was suddenly attacked with a fit of coughing and hoarseness, and obliged to relinquish the book to her next neighbour.

Her grand forte, however, was in listening to a paragraph, or even a whole volume of French or Italian read aloud. On these occasions, she gathered so much from the reader's tone of voice, and the countenances of other listeners, as to be able to adjust her own to the subject with a facility that generally escaped suspicion, or if suspicion were excited, it seldom ripened into detection; for if asked point blank whether she understood the language, she blushed, and hesitated, and disclaimed all pretensions to a *thorough* knowledge of it, with such profound humility, as left little doubt of her being at least as well acquainted with it as half the company.

And thus Diana Bell passed on from year to year, manœuvring and acting her part with infinite labour, but with little peace of mind. Nor were the shafts of criticism levelled against her with any great severity, for she was good-looking, good-natured, and always alive to the interest of the moment, contributing her share of cheerfulness and amusement wherever she went. In short, she was a sort of favourite, perhaps more so than she would have

been had her title to intellectual superiority been more substantially grounded. And with all this tendency to affectation and absurdity, this false estimate of what is morally and intrinsically worthy of esteem, she possessed a tolerable share of good sense and good feeling, and might, had she been satisfied to be plain Dinah Bell, have been a useful and estimable woman.

Reader, is there anything in this character bearing even the most distant resemblance to thy own ? Let us hope not. Diana Bell was of the olden school. We will turn to a fairer page in the history of human nature, and see what modern follies are recorded there.

CHAPTER II.

It was during the visit alluded to in the foregoing chapter, that the family of Peter Bell received the addition of an infant daughter, who, born under the auspices of her aunt's refining genius, was distinguished by the name of Rosa.

We will not solicit the attention of the reader to the events, or indications of her childhood, but pass on to a time when the aspect of the farmer's pecuniary affairs wore a somewhat less favourable character than that already described, and when, could wishes have brought back the sum of money engaged in the manufactory at Glossom, it would speedily have been devoted to purposes of greater urgency, and more immediate need. Still it was some consolation to possess a share in this concern, though the profits resulting from the connection, had fallen far short of what Peter Bell had been led to expect. It was upon the bare fact of that possession that the farmer thought with secret satisfac-

tion, for we must not conceal from the reader that with all his manliness and simplicity of character, there was mingled a slight taint of that spirit of the world that led him on to the verge of the great vortex into which so many thousands have plunged, and where, if he struggled hard to maintain his stand amongst the general rush and whirl and tumult of human affairs, he was at least so deafened by the uproar, so bewildered by the confusion, as not always to hear the whisperings of the still small voice at the time when it was the most necessary for his right guidance. Thus, he would not unfrequently turn from the clear evidence of his own mind, to the consideration of expediency, to the opinion of his neighbours, and to the subject of his own importance, as a man of business; and thus, he endeavoured to meet the exigencies of the times with a rapidly diminishing capital, rather than withdraw, while it was yet in his power, from the field, the market, and the public convention of influential men, to settle down in obscurity upon a straitened income.

If the farmer with his limited number of ideas, and naturally quiescent mind, was in some measure removed from his safe standing by the influence of the times, it is not difficult to imagine what must have been that influence upon the character of his more prompt, energetic, and yet facile help-mate. In vain did the husband strive to check the out-breakings of the spirit of worldly emulation in his

own family. In half the cases that occurred, he was but half in earnest, and of the other half there were many of that peculiar character that renders the objector well pleased to be opposed, and opposed effectually. Thus, when Martha insisted upon a carpet of sufficient dimensions to cover the *whole* floor of the parlour, he thought it right to dismiss the subject with a decided negative, as far as related to the emanation of the means from his own pocket; but when she actually procured one with the profits of her dairy, he trod upon the carpet with as much satisfaction as if the thing itself had been in perfect accordance with his own secret wishes.

And is it not so too frequently in our intercourse with mankind? We wash our hands of the responsibility, and are well satisfied to reap the fruits of another's deviation from the line of right we had laid down for ourselves. It is curious,—it might be useful—to pursue this subject farther, to tear away the veil which man's ingenuity is perpetually placing between his own eyes, and the path he has to tread, in order that he may be able to say to society, to his conscience, and to the great Judge of all the world, “I am not culpable,—I did not see.”

Referring this subject to the reader's own bosom, as one closely connected with the highest interests of mankind, we turn to the picture of the young heroine of our story, as she returned from her evening rambles with her little playmate Alice Gordon, the daughter of a neighbouring clergyman, whose humble means,

and numerous family, rendered it necessary for them to confine the sphere of their personal indulgences to such pleasures as rural life affords.

Alice Gordon was the second daughter, and though one year younger than Rosa, there was an expression of thoughtfulness in her earnest face, which led every casual observer to suppose she was older, and more experienced than her friend.

Indeed, Rosa was a perfect personification of childhood in its exuberance of health, elasticity, and beauty. Formed in a delicate and perfect mould, the graceful play of her limbs was scarcely rivalled by the liveliness and vivacity of her countenance, expanded as it was into many a thrilling laugh, of such intense and irrepressible gladness, that it seemed like the voice of the spirit of joy, to which the life and the loveliness of nature had given a momentary utterance.

It was often said of Rosa Bell in her childhood, that whatever situation in life she might be destined to fill, she would be happy,—that grief would never plant a wrinkle on her brow, nor close up the fountain of gladness within her bosom. It is true, tears had been seen to gush from her bright dark eyes, but they were dashed away in a moment, and before there was time to pity her, she was gone like a young deer bounding over the lawn, her hair floating back upon the wind, and all her grievances forgotten in the sport of the butterfly, or the bloom of the woodland flower.

It may easily be supposed that the home discipline to which Rosa was accustomed, was not the most strict or salutary that could have been devised. Indeed, it scarcely amounted to discipline at all, unless to mark out the cardinal vice by levelling the greatest force of practicable displeasure against the innumerable rents exhibited in her daily dress, was likely to convey any correct idea of moral responsibility. Farther than this, the fond mother, with her alternate fits of petulance and indulgence never went; and what was much to be regretted, Peter Bell, from a sort of constitutional indolence, left all these things to his wife; except that on long Sabbath afternoons he would confine the young rebel between his knees, while she spelled through a chapter of the Bible, after which he would stroke down her glossy curls, and tell her to be a good girl, and mind what her mother said to her; and strange as it may seem, the child used to look more pleased with the grave tones of her father's voice, and the affectionate pressure of his hand, than she ever did with her mother's unlimited gratification of her eager appetites, and unreasonable wishes. For there is a quickness in the minds of children, an almost intuitive perception of what is right and just, that often makes them despise the giver, even while they urgently demand the gift, and no one could be more urgent in their requirements or more quick to hurl contempt upon absurdity, than Rosa Bell.

Beyond the beauty of form and complexion,

combined with the playful vivacity of youth, the heroine of our story had at this period of her life but little to boast of, nor was there more refinement mingled with her gaiety, than is generally to be found amongst the inmates of a farmer's family. Healthy and agile, and allowed at a very early age to ride or run wild at pleasure over hill and dale, it is more than probable, despite her natural loveliness, she would have acquired something of the vulgarity which almost necessarily attaches to rustic habits, had not the society of the Gordons operated beneficially upon her mind and manners. It is true, Aunt Dinah laboured diligently, both during her annual visits, and in many erudite epistles to counteract this grovelling tendency, but Rosa was quick-sighted, and having learned already to laugh at her aunt's pretensions, it was vain to expect her to be guided by her advice.

To the mother, however, this persevering advocate for the progress of refinement addressed herself with more effect. In the heart of Martha Bell the seed had long been sown, and in her house the fruits were now beginning to appear. Hand-screens, hearth rugs, and fancy china, were already seen in different departments of her establishment. Inconveniences, borne with for years in patience and humility, were waxing intolerable. Carpenters and upholsterers gave place to higher and more studiously invited guests, but whenever the farmer mounted the drab pillion upon Gaffer Grey, for the accommoda-

tion of his wife, she was attacked with pains in her side and other symptoms of bodily uneasiness, urgently demanding the ease and the luxury of a one-horse chaise.

“ And why not ? ” was the constant argument of Martha Bell. “ If times *are* bad, we are partners in the manufactory at Glossom, and while we ride double upon Gaffer, the Fynches drive their pair.”

To all her remonstrances on this subject, however, there was a quiet unproductive smile, with which Peter Bell used uniformly to reply, for he could remember the time when a pillion on the noble grey seemed to raise its mistress to the highest pitch of her ambition, and he could not believe, so long as her activity and bloom remained unimpaired, that she could be in need of greater personal indulgence. He felt, too, a conviction daily increasing upon him, that it was necessary to set bounds to the spirit of encroachment, and therefore, he determined, that beyond a high-spirited, high-priced pony for his daughter, no arguing, murmuring, or coaxing, should induce him to go.

It was during one of the annual visits of Diana Bell, when Rosa had attained her eighth year, without much more instruction than might be derived from her father's conversation as she rode by his side in the fields, that Mrs. Gordon went on an errand of duty to make a call at the farm.

A knock at the door was always a signal for Miss Bell as well as her sister to hasten to the toilet in-

stead of the guest, and Mrs. Gordon waited in the room below for a longer time than she could well afford to lose. No sooner had the two sisters, in their dress caps and floating ribbons entered, than their guest, well pleased to be set free from her silent and useless captivity, advanced towards them, in a bonnet of the coarsest straw, and a dress of the plainest materials, yet wearing about her person the indubitable marks of a gentlewoman; and while Diana Bell was wondering how much she had given per yard for the very scanty ribbon that tied her bonnet, she opened her business with a promptness and decision which not unfrequently made her appear to trifling minds, rather an alarming person to come in contact with.

There was nothing studied in Mrs. Gordon's look, nothing doubtful or elaborate in her manner; but her appearance, her voice, and the tone of her conversation, all clearly indicated a decided aim, a worthy purpose, and a staunch unflinching rectitude of conduct. Yet with all these recommendations, and the addition of being kind to the poor, a good neighbour, and a steady friend, she was just the kind of woman who would have pleased Martha Bell and her sister much better, had she chosen to pass their door instead of entering; and now that she had come on especial business, they sat before her with as much uneasiness as if she had come to hear the confession of their daily sins.

And yet the errand was one of great kindness, for

Mrs. Gordon knowing the neglected state of Rosa's mind, and perhaps suspecting the competency of her parents, had come to offer her own services in the way of plain useful teaching, provided Mrs. Bell would allow her daughter to go every day to the parsonage house, and join the young people there in their lessons.

Mrs. Bell of course was very grateful, and all that sort of thing; but Diana was overwhelmed, for she said none but those who mixed in good society could tell the value of a really good education, and as she had often assured her sister, a girl can never begin too young. Thus the affair being speedily settled to Mrs. Gordon's perfect satisfaction, she wished her neighbours good morning, leaving them wholly unable to account for the motives which had induced her to make such a proposition, when it was well known she had enough to do in her own family for one pair of hands, and far more than enough for one head.

The trial once made, it was soon found that Rosa Bell needed only to be allured to her tasks, for her to enter upon all the different branches of learning taught at the parsonage, with an avidity almost equal to her love of play; for she possessed a mind distinguished by uncommon quickness, and could learn by rote more than her teachers had patience to listen to in the repetition.

To Peter Bell and his wife it was quite a new thing to hear of their child's quickness in learning.

Her quickness in mischief, and in making pert replies, they had long been aware of; but their greatest fear had been, that she never would be *fond of her book*; and now that this fact was ascertained, their cup of happiness was full indeed.

"Not," said Mrs. Bell, "that it could ever be of much consequence to us, you know, but we should be sorry to keep the child at home, if she was likely to be clever."

"And may I ask," said Mrs. Gordon, rather astonished, "how you mean to dispose of her?"

"To send her to a boarding-school, to be sure, where she may have the very best instruction, and the best masters."

"Will you not find that plan expensive?"

"No doubt we shall, but we intend Rosa to provide for herself afterwards."

"In what way?"

"As a governess, of course. It is impossible that we should otherwise afford to give her an expensive education."

"But you might give her a plain, useful education, that would in all probability make her quite as happy, and as good."

"Like mine, I suppose you mean?"

"No, no, we must keep pace with the times."

"What would do for a farmer's wife of the last generation, is not worth calling an education now."

"My dear Mrs. Bell," said Mrs. Gordon, with great earnestness, "there are many things com-

prised in a good education, which we need not have masters to teach our children. I have no intention that my own girls should be ever sent from home for instruction, though I own, if our circumstances would admit of it, I should like the advantage of more assistance."

"In my turn," replied her companion, "I must observe, that I think your plan will be an expensive one."

"Those who economise at the sacrifice of their children's good," replied Mrs. Gordon, "have much to answer for. I consider that education alone as worthy of the name, by which human beings are fitted for usefulness and contentment in their individual sphere. It is necessary there should be governesses, but let the demand for the situation of teachers be lessened, and those who fill them will be better remunerated. Let them be filled too by women who have no household relations, no parents to care for in old age, no fireside place to fill; for where, I would ask of all parents who act upon your system, can the character of woman be more advantageously maintained, than within the circle of her own domestic duties!"

"But the duties of a house like ours," replied Martha Bell, "are of such a very homely and degrading kind, I cannot expect my daughter to do as I do."

"Why not?"

"Because after she has been four or five years at a fashionable boarding-school, it will be impossible

for her to go into a farmer's kitchen to make pies and puddings."

It was in vain arguing with the wife, Mrs. Gordon had found it so before; for Martha always spoke of a fashionable education as indispensable, for no other reason than because Diana Bell had told her it was so; and this fact being fully established, the necessary consequence was, that the girl must go out as a governess, partly to pay for the cost of her qualifications, and partly because they rendered her unfit to remain at home.

Upon the sober mind of Peter Bell, it was more easy to make impression, though that impression too frequently wanted impulse to render it availing. Yet to him it was not altogether impossible to form an idea of moral obligation; and when Mrs. Gordon dwelt feelingly upon the social bond connecting together the different members of a christian family, uniting their powers of usefulness, and assisting, cheering, and consoling each other, the heart of the father was touched, and he inwardly resolved that the treasure of his house should not be separated from the shelter of the paternal roof.

Unhappily for Mrs. Gordon's strenuous and powerful endeavours to do good, she had a manner of enforcing her own clear and rational convictions, which did not always recommend them to those it was her wish to benefit. There was something in her straight-forward and determined mode of proceeding, that seemed tacitly to condemn all devia-

tion from her own approved and established plans. Peter Bell had no perception of these things. He could listen to sound reasoning, caring little about the medium through which it was conveyed; but his wife was differently constituted, and after every conversation held with Mrs. Gordon on the subject of her daughter's education, she felt as if she would almost rather do her own wrong, than Mrs. Gordon's right. Thus her eloquence and her influence were both combined against the slow tendency of her husband's thoughts, which yielded on too many occasions to the swifter current of her will. She was besides, though unconsciously to herself, entirely misled by sister Dinah, who, repelled in like manner by their neighbour's domination, pronounced the Gordons to be vulgar people, who knew nothing of the world.

"And yet," said Martha Bell, with great simplicity, for she was not a harsh judging woman, when her temper, her prejudices, and her self-will were at rest, "I sometimes think their children are very amiable, and well-behaved; and sure I am that little Rosa is a more tractable and obedient child since she went to the parsonage to school."

"But only think," replied Miss Bell, "with all their boys and girls, they keep but one servant! What strife there must be behind the scenes to make any figure at all!"

In this manner the two sisters used to puzzle themselves about the peculiarities of a family, whose

habits and principles they were incapable of understanding; for if they had been admitted behind the scenes, into that world of contrivance, bustle, and labour, from which they imagined their neighbour to be emerging whenever she went abroad, they would scarcely have believed the evidence of their own senses, or have conceived it possible that the domestic machinery of such a family could have been conducted with the perfect order, regularity, and quiet which formed the basis of their contentment. Indeed, had the lady, whose character we have been describing, possessed the one virtue of a gentle, affable, and conciliating manner, she would have been too perfect for description. Her home, however, was the sphere of her excellence, while her faults were such as strangers might observe, though they seldom interfered with the happiness of her own fire-side.

It may be asked, "what was the secret of this excellence?" It was the fundamental principle of Christianity, unfolded where it is most lovely and endearing in women's character—*at home*. It was the clear conviction that education, even if it should teach all the names of all created things, would be of little consequence, unless at the same time it taught us the nature of our own souls; that to acquire a knowledge of all sciences, and arts, and means of enjoyment, is of little value when weighed in the balance against the subjugation of one selfish or inordinate desire; and that what we are, is of such

infinitely greater importance than what we know, that it ought to be the aim of all Christian parents so to cultivate the heart and the affections, that the growth of the Christian graces shall at least keep pace with the enlargement of the understanding.

That any human being can know too much, is a supposition which the writer of these pages would be sorry to be charged with, nor is it from an *excess of knowledge* that females of the middle class are now disqualified in their return from school, for sharing in the domestic duties of their humble homes. It is because, along with their knowledge, they have failed to acquire a just sense of the beauty and the value of such virtues as belong especially to the female character. What, for instance, can be more at variance with common sense and natural feeling, than that a daughter should deem it a degradation to join in the occupations, and lighten the household cares of her mother, be those cares and occupations what they may? And, in addition to this, that she must go out as a governess in order to pay for the education which has disqualified her for remaining at home?

It is also a notion which those who feel its absurdity, should do all in their power to explode, that the drudgery of domestic duty is necessarily destructive of intellectual dignity and refinement. It is high time that the fallacy of this notion should be exposed, and it is of importance to the happiness

of an immense number of the middle class, that it should be seen and understood.

While the march of intellect is sweeping from our isle the dust of ignorance, and clearing the mists of prejudice from thousands of eyes that have too long slumbered in the dark ; while the artizan with his soiled fingers turns over the leaves of his weekly magazine, and ponders upon facts, and principles, and truths, that awaken him, as it were, to a new life, at the same time that they stimulate his labours, and make him a partaker, in the midst of poverty and toil, of the enjoyments of an intellectual man, shall women, ungrateful for their high privileges, drink of the liberal tide with no better purpose than to intoxicate their senses, and beguile themselves into the belief that the acquisition of knowledge entitles them to an exemption from practical duty ; that because they can read Italian, they are henceforth to touch no vulgar utensil, nor associate even in daily labour with others less accomplished than themselves ; and that because they have learned with increased facility to observe, recollect, compare, and understand, they are not to devote such faculties to promoting the happiness of those with whom they are indissolubly connected ?

CHAPTER III.

It would be doing great injustice to the character of Diana Bell, to attribute all the aspiring pretensions of her brother's family to her influence alone. It is true, she had sown the productive seed in the mind of her brother's wife, where, falling upon genial soil, it had shot forth with interminable continuity of root and branch ; but there were favouring airs, and glowing suns, which, in the absence of the one prevailing power, tended almost equally to keep the plant alive.

Of these potent influences, the atmosphere of Glossom was perhaps the most productive, and not unfrequently after spending an hour with the elegant mistress of the establishment, did Martha Bell return with renewed vigour, to make a fresh attack upon her husband's purse ; while he, in his turn, was not averse to listen to the business-like calculations and statements of his neighbour,—his *partner*, as he felt proud to call him, though he confessed that on other subjects he did not think Mr. Fynch

a particularly well-informed or intelligent man. There was, in short, a littleness about him which the farmer found it difficult to reconcile with his preconceived notions of manly dignity. He declined explaining to his wife, and of course to any other human being, in what way this littleness had obtruded itself upon his observation ; but he might have told her that the conviction had first struck his mind while arguing on the never-ending subject of high prices, and protecting duties ; when his antagonist, as if his attention had been divided between two considerations of equal importance, took the opportunity of adjusting his luxuriant hair, and noting its well-regulated outline by his shadow on the wall.

It has been said, that a keen thirst for the beautiful constitutes one of the highest endowments of our being. If elegance might be substituted for beauty, we should have no hesitation in saying that Jeremiah Fynch was highly endowed, for his thirst for the elegant was insatiable. Born beneath the humble roof of one of the overlookers of a cotton mill in a large manufacturing town, he had first distinguished himself by his skill in drawing elegant patterns, and nature having gifted him with a large share of promptness, perseverance, and industry, in addition to his genius, he had worked his way without much difficulty to a station in society, which fully entitled him to leave his parents and the place

of his birth unnoticed in the back-ground of the plan he laid out for his life.

His partner in connubial felicity, but certainly not his helpmate, was the daughter of an officer, whose half-pay had been hoarded to purchase for his child what is called a good education,—in other words, an education the best calculated to unfit her for usefulness or contentment in the dependent sphere to which, at the death of her father, she was for a time consigned. Though extremely plain, Mrs. Fynch was elegant, and resting in her indigence with the whole burden of her indolence, refined habits, and fictitious wants, upon an uncle, who had a large family of his own, she was taken out to balls, and parties, in the hope that she might display her elegance to some purpose. At a public festival she first met with Mr. Fynch. He dressed well, danced well, and remarked that she did the same. He wanted a wife too, who could grace his table, for he had just stepped into a situation which enabled him to maintain a table of his own. The consequence was, they were married,—in the course of four years, Mrs. Fynch had become the mother of three children, while her husband, with the help of two or three idle partners, and a considerable sum of borrowed money, had established himself and his new manufactory at Glossom.

It was curious to see how soon even beneath the smoke of their own tall chimney, a little paradise

sprung up around the door of the Fynches, for elegance ruled every movement of their lives, except that which consigned them to the immediate neighbourhood of a cotton-mill. The master of the little villa acknowledged this to be a great grievance, but he hoped in the course of a few successful years to be able to exchange it for that *otium cum dignitate*, about which he had learned to talk without attaching one definite idea to the words, or even without knowing whether they were more than one.

Neither the ease nor the dignity, however, generally supposed to belong to affluence, were so readily procured as they had at first supposed, for elegance is not often cheaply maintained, and the many items of expenditure insisted upon by the lady, the many doctors who vainly attempted to cure her of—indolence, the many watering-places she was obliged to resort to, and the many dresses she was compelled to appear in, set at defiance all prospect of obtaining ease, however near it might bring the attainment of dignity.

We have said it was curious to observe the little paradise by which this elegant couple were surrounded. A little park containing three acres, and one deer, with a splendid gate, through which the factory children peeped at two swans, eyeing their own shadows in a little moat of stagnant water; for Mrs. Fynch, possessed with the romance

of an island and a boat, insisted upon having both in this little pond, and the island so nearly extended to the sides, that when the boat stood lengthwise, it touched both the centre and the mainland. Through these splendid gates, thrown open to their utmost width, the master and mistress of Glossom used to roll in their phaeton, drawn by two elegant little ponies, taught with the nicest skill to sweep round to the villa, as if to deposit some princely burden.

From the door of the mansion to the park gates, all around by the circling fence, constructed for the especial security of the single deer, the most observant eye might have looked in vain for a weed, a stone misplaced, or a flower not plucked as soon as its bloom was gone. Two gardeners were kept in constant attendance upon the hot-houses, the flower beds, the great walks, and the many little fish-ponds ; and such was the elegance of design, combined with exactness of execution, that the whole seemed rather the work of fairy hands prepared for the moonlight gambols of fairy feet, than calculated for any human purpose.

If such was the exterior of Glossom villa, what must its internal mysteries have revealed to the wondering eyes of Martha Bell, when she first took out her handkerchief to lash the dust off her leather shoes before she entered the hall. But we spare the reader a description of further minutiae. Suffice it, that all was elegant and small, and perfect of its

kind, and that Mrs. Fynch, reclining upon a sofa all day long, occupied herself with novels and embroidery, just sending for her children as she thought herself well enough to bear the sight, examining their frocks, and the lace borders of their caps, and then dismissing them again to the nursery, with a languid and pensive declaration that it was impossible to have them dressed as they ought to be without an additional nurse.

It may be supposed that Peter Bell would feel himself very much out of his element within the doors of the villa, and for that reason he seldom entered them. His intercourse with the family was kept up by talking with Mr. Fynch in his counting-house, whenever business called him to Glossom, and here it was that the manufacturer always displayed that shrewdness and natural talent, which, had they been unconnected with pretension, would have made him a happier, more respected, and more wealthy man. Devoted as he was himself in his admiration of elegance, he would sometimes venture to blame his wife for carrying the thing too far, and he not unfrequently sought the humbler abode of his partner, for the comfort of throwing his limbs about at perfect liberty, without fear of soiling carpets, misplacing ottomans, or breaking specimens of costly china.

With the female members of each family the case was widely different. Mrs. Fynch was proud to

display, Martha Bell was delighted to behold, and when she not only saw the rich furniture of Glossom villa, but heard the fashionable names of each separate article, as well as of the various specimens of art and nature distributed about the room, and when her eye fell upon elegantly bound volumes laid carelessly about, as if their pages had grown familiar, by constant reading, to the mind of her who knew not one sentiment they contained, her own was so filled with wonder and admiration, that she went away fully convinced that Mrs. Fynch was one of the cleverest and most accomplished of human beings, and that to train up her daughter in the steps of such a woman would be to do her the greatest kindness in a parent's power to bestow.

How it should be possible for Rosa Bell to attain anything like this degree of refinement or excellence at home, or even in the country, was the question that usually followed; and the fact that her daughter possessed uncommon powers of learning, instead of rendering her mother more satisfied with the means of instruction afforded in the near neighbourhood of her home, served as an additional reason for sending her away at a very early age, to an expensive and fashionable school; for it was often argued by Martha Bell, that had she been a dull child the education Mrs. Gordon was giving her own daughters would have done very well for her, but with such a memory, such quickness, and such skill in every

branch of learning, it would be a shame, nay, an actual sin, to condemn her to a farm-house for the remainder of her life.

With Rosa's quickness in acquiring knowledge, was blended an equal facility in forming attachments, and so completely had her affections been won by her kind friends at the parsonage, that the slightest mention of her parents' intention of sending her to school, would deluge her fair face with tears, and threaten to overcome the strength even of her mother's purpose. The arrival of Aunt Dinah, however, tended greatly to confirm the stronger party, and to school she was sent, or rather, taken, by her aunt, after she and Alice Gordon had wept till they could weep no longer.

And a miserable aspect all things wore at first to the tearful eyes of little Rosa, as she looked around in vain for that solicitude and admiration which had hitherto attended all her movements. She might now sob herself to sleep on her pillow, and no one inquired the cause; she might sit down upon her little trunk of valuables, when other girls were at their noisy play, and no one asked whether she was weary; she might lean her aching temples on her hand, and no one knew that she was suffering. Surely there is no loneliness like that of being first left behind by kind relatives, at a large and distant school.

And all the while that Rosa sat apart, sharing little pity, and enjoying no companionship, her fond

parents were sorely missing her sweet, playful ways, at home—her voice to cheer them at their meals—her lovely face for ever decked in smiles, and the light step that bounded in with a sort of music, which none but those who love the joy and the freshness of infancy can understand.

“If it was not for her good,” said Martha Bell, oftener than the day, “I could not endure the poor child out of my sight,” while her husband, with a deeper feeling, seemed to shrink from the very mention of her name, and might have been almost suspected of insensibility, but that he sometimes, in his way to the hay-field, would stand, for full ten minutes, looking at the little plot of garden ground his daughter used to call her own.

It could scarcely be expected that a child, with feelings so volatile as Rosa’s, should retain the strength of her home attachments, after the chain of immediate connection was broken; but that she did retain them for many months was proved by the following specimen of juvenile verses, sent to her friend, Alice Gordon, by a mutual acquaintance, who had called at the school.

THE CITY SCHOOL.

Where is my home? Oh, ask me not,
For I am far away;
Yet, still my heart has ne’er forgot
That dearly lov’d, remember’d spot,
Where once I used to play.

Where is my home ? I have no home
Here, in this stranger land ;
From greenwood shades, and fields I come,
Happy and free I used to roam,
But now alone I stand.

Alone, amid the busy throng,
And look around to see,
If any, as they pass along,
To my own native home belong,
And will remember me.

But no. They say I'm grown so tall;
I know I'm pale and thin
For I am tir'd of street and wall,
And I am sick at heart with all
The city's ceaseless din.

My home is on the sunny lea,
My father's home and mine,
Where dawns the morn so cheerily,
And blithely hums the wand'ring bee,
And bright the dew-drops shine.

Though here the morning sun may rise,
He rises not to me ;
In vain I look for cloudless skies,
And turn away my weary eyes,
That ache with all I see.

They tell me I must learn to sing
In measur'd notes and true ;
Masters and music-books they bring :
Oh ! let me hear the birds of spring,
And I will warble too.

They tell me I must sweetly smile,
And softly look and speak ;
Alas ! my thoughts are gone the while,
O'er hill and dale, for many a mile,
And tears are on my cheek.

I see the linnet on the spray,
I hear the murmuring stream,
And through the long and weary day,
Through heartless task and joyless play,
Of my sweet home I dream.

They tell me all the sports I love
Are childish sports, and rude ;
But dearer is the shady grove,
The woodlands where I used to rove,
Than this great solitude.

The garden that I used to weed,
The flow'rs I lov'd to rear,
The little birds I used to feed,
And all the books I used to read,
I may not read them here.

The roses from my cheek are gone,
The music from my voice.
Roll on, ye heavy hours, roll on ;
Oh ! when my home I look upon,
How will my heart rejoice !

Rosa's talent for inventing rhymes had never been dreamed of before, except by her young friend, and when Alice showed the lines to Mrs. Bell, in the hope of effecting something favourable for her friend's return, the mother wept tears of actual joy

at the thought that school had brought another of her daughter's faculties to light.

At the time of the holidays, this prodigy of genius herself returned, and though it is probable she would have felt more intense delight in revisiting the scenes of her childhood six months earlier, she was very laudably excited by again beholding her home.

"But how low the roof looks, dear papa," said she, as her father led her by the hand to the door, "and this narrow entrance,—I never noticed it so much before. Really, I don't think Lady Fanshawe, whose niece sleeps in the same room with me, could get into this passage at all; and then how dark when the door is shut! Dear me! I can't see mamma—I shall tread upon the old cat. I don't know where I am walking upon these bricks!"

And thus the little lady went on, but she threw herself at last with such perfect satisfaction into her mother's arms, that Peter Bell forgave her all, and they sat down together, almost as happy as any three people could be.

Nor was Alice Gordon long in running over to the farm, just to see whether the carriage wheels she had been listening to, were those of the borrowed gig, in which Peter Bell had gone to the market town to meet his daughter, after Martha had entreated and remonstrated, until, for very peace sake the pillion had been removed from Gaffer Grey, and

polished harness placed upon the patient beast instead.

Every body, even the kindly judging Alice, thought Rosa was a little affected for the first few days, but it wore off amongst the old familiar scenes of her childhood, and her native vivacity, added to the warmth of feeling which a year's absence had tended rather to heighten than subdue, so won upon the hearts of all around her, that when the time of her return to school arrived, the second parting seemed more painful than the first.

It was by slow and painful degrees, that the farmer and his wife became convinced that what Mrs. Gordon had predicted of their child, was actually taking place, that she was becoming weaned from early attachments, and by living exclusively with those who held themselves immeasurably above the sphere of life in which she was born, the associations connected with that sphere were losing all importance and interest in her eyes. Never were they more convinced of this, than by the report of a worthy neighbour, who had called at the school, and who, in a short interview with Rosa, had been treated with pointed ridicule and contempt.

"It is not so with the parson's children," said Peter Bell.—"I saw Alice Gordon walk through the High street on the market day, with old Mar-

garet Fisher leaning on her arm, and when have either Mr. or Mrs. Gordon been made to feel that they were inferior to their sons and daughters?"

"It was, indeed," replied Martha, "very wrong of Rosa to turn away and laugh at old Margaret, worthy woman as she is; and you may depend upon it, she shall hear what I think of her conduct, when she comes home."

But when the holidays again arrived, the hearts of the parents, after long pining for their child, relented; and she was suffered to play off her various arts of pleasing, and displeasing, unchidden, except for the increasing expenditure of each succeeding year.

There is a degree of patience, however, which the most enduring cannot command, and when Peter Bell, in walking through the fields with his daughter, discovered by her conversation on familiar subjects, that he had been paying for the acquirement of anything but common sense, he did inwardly resolve that she should henceforth stay at home, and milk the cows, if she could not acquit herself more like a rational creature.

"And pray what has the poor child been doing?" asked her mother, astonished at her husband's unusual warmth of indignation.

It was only when much excited, that Peter Bell spoke with anything like fluency; but there laboured in his breast, beneath the disguise of a quiet

and subdued exterior, a fountain of deep feeling, which sometimes found a voice; and now he bade his wife be still, that she might listen to his story, for he had long borne in silence the burden of which he was determined to relieve his mind, so far at least as words could tend to its relief.

"We have now," said he, "been paying for three years' schooling on behalf of thatgirl, and what with books, and bills, and journeys to and fro, I find it a most expensive business, far more so than I can in the present times afford."

Here Martha interposed. She had herself been startled at the numerous items, added to the terms of admission,—she had also deeply felt and regretted the state of the times,—no one felt it more, and she applied her handkerchief with no feigned sorrow to her eyes; but rather than deprive her daughter of the advantages of a good education, she would part with one of her servants; indeed, she had already made arrangements for doing so, in the conviction that the times required it.

Peter, astonished at the disinterested generosity of his wife, had no more courage to enforce the necessity of Rosa's remaining at home; but his heart was full, and he went on.

"If the child was really learning what would be of advantage to her, I should be satisfied; but it strikes me she is only learning to *talk*."

"To talk of what we do not understand, I dare

say," observed the mother, "for you must remember, we were not taught in our day as people are now."

"Well, let that pass," replied the husband, not yet satisfied. "I am content that one-half of her conversation should be set down as Latin, French, Italian, or what you please, for it is beyond my comprehension; but I should like the part I do understand to be common sense."

"I ask you again," interrupted Martha, "what it is the poor child has said or done, for I have been so busy since she came home, I have hardly had an opportunity of seeing her."

"Well, I'll tell you how she behaved, and you shall judge for yourself. In the first place, she saw some clouds that looked like rain, and this made her talk about her bonnet, and something she called her pelerine, for nearly half an hour. She then found out the grass was wet, and protested it was impossible for her to go over the fields; and well she might, for her shoes were no thicker than my handkerchief, and the strings they were fastened on with, came untied at least ten times before we got home. All this I could have endured with patience, but when we had left the meadow path, and the way lay open and fair before us, I began to talk to her about the state of the times, how necessary it was to meet our increased expenses with increased economy, and how much you were making by your dairy, and your laudable exertions in many other ways. I was telling her, too, of some of the losses of the past year,

and had just got to the death of old Daisy, when she set up a loud scream, and bounded off into the meadow quite down to the low marshy spot, where she was soon wet up to her ancles, and all this after a beetle! In her own good time she returned, with a little brown thing not larger than a pin's head, declaring it was the finest specimen she had ever seen.

"Finest specimen! thought I, but I kept silence, and we walked on.

"The next thing that attracted her attention, was stone, thrown up by the men who are mending the fence in the cow-pasture. I do not know, and suppose I never shall, the cramp name she called the stone, but this also was a specimen, with which she seemed much delighted, and being too large for the little bag that contained her pocket-handkerchief, I must put it in my pocket, and carry it home. It was not the weight of the stone, I objected to. There is One above who knows how often, and how fondly, I have carried the child herself, and would again, though she has grown so tall; but, as I said before, I should have liked her to exhibit a little more of something like common sense."

"And was this all?" asked Martha, smiling, and thinking it no great matter.

"No, it was not all," replied her husband, gravely. "She was so pleased with the stone that she actually proposed to me to have the field ploughed out, *assuring* me it was the opinion of

Professor somebody, that such specimens would generally be found in soil like what she saw where the men were digging. Yes, she actually proposed that I should plough up my best piece of pasture land ; and, in order that she might fill my pockets with stones ! I assure you, I thought it a bad omen for my purse, and I begin to be very much afraid we shall have to repent not having taken Mrs. Gordon's advice. Have patience, Martha, and listen to me. I have not told you all, and really after three years' schooling, and such bills as we have had to pay, it is not very encouraging to be treated as I have been this morning.

"As we walked over Westwood Brow, we saw old Abraham down below us, driving the ewes into the dales. I thought myself it was a pretty sight, as he stood leaning upon his staff, with his dog behind him, while he counted them as they went past ; and I pointed it out to Rosa, who used to be pleased with such things before she went to school ; and pleased indeed she was, though not exactly in the way I should have wished, for she was pleased to intreat, nay, almost to implore me to run down the hill, and tell old Abraham to stand still just where he was, and keep all the sheep quiet while she amused herself with sketching them !

"Go yourself," said I, not liking to be sent on such a fool's errand, ; and away she flew, while the poor old man, who always liked to humour her fan-

cies, consented to remain where he was, until the sheep had all strayed into the turnip-field."

"And how did it happen," asked Martha Bell, "that you could not stop them?"

"I could have stopped them very well," replied her husband, "but I had lost my temper with the child, and I turned away into the wood, to think of her sweet pleasant ways before she left her own fire-side, and grew so clever; and to pray God she might not do more harm than good with her beauty, her finery, and her school learning."

It was at the close of a summer's day, that the farmer held this conversation with his wife. The air was sultry and calm, and they had seated themselves upon a bench beneath the parlour window, where a canopy of sweetbriar, roses, and jessamine protected them from the too brilliant rays of the declining sun; while, at a little distance, a row of tall elms cast a deep shadow upon a broad green walk, closely mown, and exhibiting on its sunny side, the gay flowers of Martha's garden, the delight of her eye, and not unfrequently the pride of her heart.

It was an evening well calculated to dissipate the anxious cares of day, and soothe the troubled soul to rest. Even Martha Bell was silent, and plied her needle without interrupting the coo of the wood-pigeons that sat in the high elms almost immediately overhead.

It was one of those evenings in which the very

stillness of nature seems to impart something of its own tranquillity to the restless and ambitious soul of man, while through the calmer surface of his own feelings he can behold and contemplate their depth. And it was thus that Peter Bell sat musing upon things present and to come, until serious thoughts of the end and aim of man's existence rose before him, and he began to question whether there was not a service required of every member of the Christian family, beyond that of mere industry at home, and integrity before the eyes of men.

He had thought long, and it might have been profitably, had not the habit of thinking without any practical purpose occupied the greatest portion of his life, when his reverie was interrupted by the sound of merry voices, and looking up, he saw, moving slowly along the green walk, their white dresses scattering the leaves of the roses as they passed, the light forms of Rosa and her friend Alice Gordon, with their arms around each other, prolonging the hour of parting, as they often did, by each walking home with the other, until maternal authority detained one or other of the loiterers at her proper home.

Dissatisfied as Peter Bell had that morning been with his daughter, he could neither look upon her beauty, nor contemplate her ardent and still unchanged affection for her lovely friend, without feelings of tenderness and admiration; and when *for the twentieth time* she had bid good night to

Alice, and came and seated herself upon the roots of the elm, with one arm resting upon her father's knee, he felt something more than forgiveness rising up in his heart towards her.

"Come, Rosa," said her mother, "it is time to go into the house; the air is growing damp."

But still Rosa did not move; and, more irritated than she had acknowledged by her husband's recital of the follies of the morning, Martha called her daughter again, and in a sharper tone than usual.

"I will come soon," replied Rosa, in a subdued and gentle voice, "but I want to say one word to my father."

The word father, was always touching to the heart of Peter Bell, because it was the name he had taught his child to call him, in the days when he believed she had loved him better than now; and he laid his hand upon her cheek, and bade her go on. What then was his surprise to find that tears were streaming from her eyes, and that the one word she had wished to utter was interrupted by her gathering sobs.

"Rosa, my child," said he, "what ails you?"

But still she could not answer, until at last, folding her arms around his neck, she confessed her fears that she had grievously offended him, for that he had never looked so angry with her as on that day.

It may well be supposed that a reconciliation was speedily effected, for there was nothing but a wish

to please and to be pleased on either side. But it was thus that the parents and their child, from the different scenes and circumstances with which they were associated, were perpetually misunderstanding each other. Nor was it possible it should be otherwise: each party had their different occupations, interests, and objects of pursuit. The bond of family union was broken, and she who ought to have been the comfort of her father's house, and the support of her parents' advancing years, was forming connections and associations of thought and feeling, which must eventually separate her habits and inclinations from theirs.

It was painful to Rosa to find on each return home, that her father's house looked more humble, he himself more homely, and her mother not only less refined, but positively more vulgar. It was painful to a heart naturally affectionate like hers, to find that her only attachments were giving way to an often-repeated sensation of dissatisfaction, and even disgust; and that so far from wishing to remain with her parents, and lighten their load of domestic care, she was glad to return to school, and mingle again in society in which the refinements and embellishments of life were more valued.

Nor let the fault rest wholly with the young heart thus weaned from its natural attachments. Lively, versatile, and gifted with an extraordinary facility in acquiring the tastes, and adapting herself to the *habits* of those around her, it would have been a

phenomenon as unaccountable as rare, had Rosa either retained the simplicity of her character, required any definite ideas of filial duty. The error was in her education,—the error was her parent's,—the consequences were such as hundreds to deplore.

CHAPTER IV.

A STRIKING contrast with the highly decorated little villa of Glossom, was presented by the residence of the Rev. Robert Gordon, rector of Waterton. Not that a certain kind of elegance was wanting even here ; but ornament had so often been made to give place to utility, both within and without, that the parsonage-house was distinguished by nothing so much as the general aspect of comfort, order, and respectability, which pervaded every apartment, and struck the observer at every view of the garden and adjacent grounds.

Nor was it for want of taste, both natural and cultivated, that the Gordons lived so plainly, but simply because they were poor, and determined to be contented with the lot assigned them by Providence. It is true, Mr. Gordon would sometimes remonstrate, and renew the frequent—perhaps too frequent—observation, that a certain appearance of wealth is necessary to recommend a clergyman to his flock, and support him in their esteem and reverence ;

but to this remark Mrs. Gordon had always one reply, "A clergyman, even if he be poor, sets a better example by living reputably within his income, than by always wearing an unsoiled coat, and leaving the charities of life unfulfilled." For it was a strong principle with this excellent woman, that he who has but small pecuniary means is as much bound to give a little out of his little, as the rich man to give liberally out of his abundance; and it was by her systematic household economy that she herself was able not only to support a large family in comfort and respectability, but also to assist the neighbouring poor.

Nor was there any member of this family backward in contributing their share either in the way of help or charity. By the cheerful performance of her own domestic duties she taught her daughters to think that necessary labour involves no mental degradation; and these duties being shared almost exclusively with her children, the burden was considerably lightened, and that most objectionable part of menial occupation, which consists of association with vulgar minds, effectually prevented. She would sometimes astonish Rosa Bell by the nature of her conversation with her daughters while busy in the dairy or the kitchen; for, unlike most good managers, Mrs. Gordon would freely confess that the conduct of household affairs need not necessarily occupy the *whole*, or even *half* of a woman's thoughts; that when once the most approved

and readiest mode of operation had become familiar, the hands might be busy, while the head was disengaged ; and in support of her theory, she not unfrequently varied the monotony of her own pursuits, by having her daughters read to her by turns while she was at work.

Those who would combat the long established prejudices of society have to perform a difficult and ungrateful task. Ridicule is perhaps the only return that will be made to the novel assertion, that even culinary operations may be cheerfully conducted by a woman of polished manners and cultivated understanding ; that while sharing such occupations with her children, she may converse on literary and intellectual topics ; and that even the fine arts may succeed in their turn to fill up the leisure hours afforded by a well regulated economy.

The contemplation of Martha Bell in her kitchen afforded no sort of example of what Mrs. Gordon was in hers. All the business resting upon her head and hands, and that was more than pen could well describe, seemed to be prompted, stimulated, and kept up, by a process of incessant scolding. Not that she was in any respect a morose, ill-tempered woman, or even difficult to please. So far from this, she was kind in affliction, considerate in illness, and charitable to the needy ; but it had never once fallen within the compass of her mind *to conceive it possible* that the affairs of her house-

hold could be properly conducted, unless every member of it was scolded into obedience, or activity. And thus, she drove away all thoughts of peace or comfort from the sphere of her operations, convincing her refined and accomplished daughter, that to be associated with her mother in her domestic management, would be the greatest of all earthly afflictions.

The time, however, was now drawing near when Rosa Bell must either make the experiment, or go forth into the world to prove the value of her own acquirements. Sixteen summers had now rolled over her head, imparting as they did to nature, fresh beauty and fresh bloom, without one dreary winter having intervened to destroy, or even to impair the charms they had been gradually unfolding; and had not these rolling years brought sad experience to the minds of her parents, Rosa might have been one of the happiest, as she was one of the most beautiful of created beings.

Peter Bell had never been a wealthy man, though for several successful years he had realized considerable sums of money, but the whole system of farming affairs was changed since then, and it was now with some difficulty that he raised his yearly rent. The manufactory at Glossom too was not so flourishing as he had calculated upon, and he often wondered how Mr. Fynch could indulge himself with so many of the expensive elegancies of life, while the share of *profit* awarded to him as a partner was

so extremely small. Something certainly was due, as his friend often told him, to the respectability of the establishment, and he granted that to a manufacturer, an appearance of competency might be highly advantageous, which to a farmer might operate in a very different way; while, habitually judging the best he could of every one around him, and mentally too indolent to trouble himself with other people's motives when not developed so clearly as to be understood without reflection, he dismissed the subject of Mr. Fynch's expenditure whenever it was obtruded upon his thoughts, with a quiet, "well! well!" and a conclusion, that time would set all things right.

With the same quiescent feeling gaining upon him as his years advanced, he had long been accustomed to yield almost every disputed point to the importunities of his wife, for we generally find it is the most active, not the most powerful spirit that gains the mastery: and other strong men, besides the son of Manoah, have slumbered while their strength was shorn away by feeble hands.

Rosa Bell at the age of sixteen had completed her education, but she was yet too young to enter upon the life for which she was destined. What then was to be done? She must not live at-home, and let her acquirements run to waste. She had evinced at a very early age, an uncommon taste for music, and her proficiency was commensurate with her talents. What was to be done? her fingers trained to the most

delicate and skilful execution must not be unemployed ; and though her father's house had hitherto been guiltless of such dulcet sounds as she was in the habit of producing, and though the farmer himself protested against the expense of a piano, means were devised for hoarding up the profits of the dairy, and purchasing one at half price without his knowledge.

Still he thought there was a good deal in what his wife so often repeated about the necessity of practice, and as they had given their daughter the very best education, it would be a pity to let it all be given in vain.

Thus, one thing after another was first bought, and then reconciled, until, with the stimulus of Rosa's taste and her mother's secret ambition, the farmhouse was in a fair way for becoming a habitation to which the family at Glossom, or almost any other family might be invited.

The consequences which followed were natural and almost inevitable. With so many choice additions to their means of accommodation, and above all, with a daughter so well calculated to grace her father's house, it would be a waste of good things indeed—a total throwing away of the whole expense, not to invite such guests as could understand and appreciate the improvement at the farm. The Gordons, to be sure, were not unfrequent witnesses of what was going on ; but Mrs. Bell believed they were too envious, *poor things!* to appear to notice that any thing had been done. And no wonder,

for it must be very painful to them, with their large family, all kept at home, and no governess, nor tutor, nor means of sending the children to school, to see what other people could do ; but the Fynches, the Baldwins, the Scotts, and some half-dozen other families, would be able to enjoy coming to Waterton now.

In short, Martha Bell was determined to have a party, and, startled as her husband was at the first proposal, she gained her point ; but with such conditions as would have quelled the ardour of a woman less persevering than herself. Not one item of unnecessary expense was to be incurred, and as a safeguard against this, no additional assistance in the house was to be looked for.

With these conditions, Martha fearlessly and faithfully promised to comply, for she had fixed upon the time of her sister's annual visit for the important event, and Diana was a host in herself. But who shall tell the nightly thought, the daily care, the strife, the tumult and confusion which, where the means are limited, and the labourers few, mark out the season of preparation for a party, as one of such incalculable misery, that no fruition of enjoyment can obliterate the remembrance of what it cost.

In vain did Martha Bell lay down her head upon her pillow at night. In the darkness, when it was impossible to distinguish betwixt raspberry jam and mustard, she found no rest ; and, even in her

ams, she seemed to be floating upon a sea of y, whose opacity defeated the combined ingenuity of herself and sister Dinah.

From such distressing visions she awoke with a rt, to find that morning had already dawned, to l, with fresh vividness, that all things were rally advancing towards the great day, and that, all probability, half would not be ready by the pointed time.

Loud was the summons that now rang through a house an hour before the usual time of rising, and rapid were the steps that hurried "from kitchen refectory," awakening the very fowls, and reminding them how many new-laid eggs would be wanted to meet the exigency of the times.

All the practical part of the business, the actual udgery, devolved upon the mistress of the house. Her sister was the presiding genius, who told of a numerous items that would be wanted, and undled her interminable list of recipes for making ery thing in the best and cheapest manner.

Those who are acquainted with the concoction of od things, are aware that the cheapest method is t always the most successful; and so many are e failures incident to experiment, even in the tchen, that Mrs. Bell, who had hitherto scolded om habit, now scolded from positive vexation.

"What would Peter say to all this waste? What were people good for that would not work as ell as give directions?" The very maid—the one

luckless maid (the other had been parted with to pay for Rosa's education) seemed to have lost the use of her hands, and actually broke the best china cream jug in lifting it from the shelf.

It may very properly be asked, where, all this while, was Rosa—the real centre around which this world of chaos was moving. She was reading "Lalla Rookh," in her own chamber, with the wreath of flowers for her hair, a present from her aunt, laid on the bed beside her, and the satin dress, prepared for the evening of exhibition, hung up in view, that she might feast her eye at intervals upon its silvery folds.

Very different was the occupation of her father, who, finding little comfort within doors, had walked out, determined, if he could not quiet his conscience about the affair of the party, at least to remain in ignorance of the means employed to bring about the wished-for end. It is more than probable that, had he been acquainted with even half these means, he would have put a stop to the proceedings of his womankind; his ideas of preparation went no farther than to multiply the usual number of rich cakes, before which he was in the habit of sitting down, and he walked amongst his sheep, and his cattle, and lost all recollection of the party, in the weightier consideration of falling prices and comparatively worthless stock.

At last the eventful day arrived, nay, the very *afternoon* of the day, and Mrs. Bell's one servant,

dressed in her yellow gown, with short sleeves, from which her crimson elbows burst upon the sight, after having gone through a regular training under the eye of Aunt Dinah, prepared herself, for the first time in her life, to perform the arduous task of handing tea; her head filled, even to giddiness, with a variety of new sensations, and charges to do, and not to do, what she had never seen done in her whole life.

With all customary appliances and means, the entertainment of a party is an affair of trifling moment in the experience of man or woman; but where every thing has to be stretched to its utmost extent to cover all defects—where a false gloss has to be thrown over the whole, and where whatever appears pleasant or palatable in the parlour has been produced by straining, and scorching, and agonizing in the kitchen, the case is materially altered, and every thinking being must admit, that a party ought to be agreeable indeed, to pay for the pains of preparation.

First of the visitors at Waterton farm, were the Gordons, who, ever ready to assist, thought it possible their friends might want a helping hand. Indeed, they were dressed so plainly, that it would have been no difficulty with them to have taken a part, even in culinary operations; but Rosa, well knowing that by any interference with her mother, under present circumstances, confusion would be worse confounded, entreated them to remain with

her, and take no notice of anything they might see or hear.

“ But you are so very stylish, Rosa,” said Alice, who was dressed in plain white muslin, “ I am almost afraid to sit beside you.”

“ Papa tells me I am like a play woman,” said Rosa, laughing, and at the same time glancing with evident satisfaction towards a glass, which no woman could have found fault with for the image it reflected.

Rosa Bell was not affected, though the first year she spent at school had given promise that she would be so. This tendency, however, had lately worn off, and as she saw into the pretensions of others, she seemed more inclined to ridicule their absurdities, than adopt them herself. She was a beauty, and she knew it; but her vanity was as superficial, as it was undisguised; for she knew also there were other qualities more estimable than beauty, in which she was lamentably deficient, and she often thought that Alice Gordon, who could neither sing nor play, nor was distinguished by any striking personal attractions, was in reality a thousand times more estimable, and even more lovely than herself.

The difference between real dignity, and mere pretension, had never been more apparent to her mind than on the present occasion. Mrs. Gordon and her daughter Jane, the oldest of the family, were women of strong sense and polished manners,

who, in no way affected by the minute varieties observable upon the surface of social life, could enter a room without any perceptible sign of noticing its furniture, its size, or its classification as to rank or style. But Alice was more sensitively alive to impressions, and this not only rendered her more charming, but more capable of sympathising with Rosa, whose feelings, like the mountain lake, were stirred by every movement in the atmosphere around, and varied in their tone and character by every passing cloud.

"Do you know," said Alice, to her friend, "who papa is going to bring with him this afternoon?"

"No," replied Rosa, smiling, "unless it be Johnson, the clerk, for I think Mr. Gordon is seldom seen abroad without him."

"My father seldom visits," replied Alice, "but he intends being here this afternoon."

"I will make a better guess this time," said Rosa, smiling again,—“judging from the pleasure of your countenance, I believe he is going to bring with him his quondam pupil, young Otway.”

"Nonsense, Rosa. How foolish you are. It is four years since Otway left us, for you know my father never approved of taking pupils after his family grew up."

"And yet these four years have not made you forget what a handsome boy he was. I wish you

would refresh my memory, for I have no recollection of any of your father's pupils, except one quiet boy, with white cheeks, low forehead, and hair like thatch. But tell me who is coming with Mr. Gordon?"

"My brother George."

"Is George returned then?" exclaimed Rosa, almost as happy as her friend; for George Gordon was beloved by all who knew him, and Aliee and her friend had planned, in their girlish simplicity, that Rosa should be his wife.

Their conversation was now interrupted by the sound of approaching steps, and at the same moment Diana Bell rushed breathless into the room, with a handful of gaily bound annuals, which, by her ingenious contrivance, had been hired and brought privately from the neighbouring town. These she disposed hastily upon the table, some open and some closed,—turned up the corner of the table-cloth,—dragged out the ottomans,—removed some of the chairs from the wall, so as to give to the best parlour the appearance of being in common use, and then turning as hastily round, glided gently and deliberately towards her newly arrived guests, with an air as completely disengaged, as if to receive company had been the most easy and familiar avocation of her life.)

Quick-sighted as Rosa was to the ridiculous, she could scarcely help smiling; but the appearance of George Gordon and his father, gave her something

else to think about, and she found with some satisfaction that her old play-fellow had grown up into a handsome-looking youth, whose broad clear forehead, dark eyes, and open countenance, were a faithful index to his noble and enlightened mind. We will not however, pretend, that George Gordon was in any way calculated for a hero of romance. It must be remembered, not only that he was poor, but that he had been accustomed to accommodate himself to habits of industry and economy, essentially at variance with romantic feeling. Under such circumstances, his manners were the best that could have been expected,—easy without polish, and dignified without assumption. But there was still something beyond this, whether arising out of his unflinching sincerity, or the manly tones of his voice, that made Rosa feel for the first time in her life, as if she should be afraid of him, and when he fixed his grave thoughtful eyes upon her face, she wished the wreath of roses with which she had once been so delighted, had bloomed on any brow but hers.

Last of the party at that critical moment, when Mrs. Bell began to tremble for the credit of her toast and cakes, arrived Mr. and Mrs. Fynch, and along with them their hopeful son, Frederick, as spruce a dandy as ever hailed the welcome promise of incipient whisker and moustache.

Rosa and he had never met before; and as far as the countenance of the youth might be said to

be expressive of anything, it was a prompt determination that this meeting should not be their last.

Thus far all things went well ; except that clouds began to lower, and the lady of Glossom Villa declared her inability to exist through a storm of thunder and lightning. All things went well. For almost everybody had on their best clothes, and believed that all eyes were upon them. Peter Bell was perhaps the least in his element of any present, but he had secured the possession of his arm-chair, and feeling himself responsible for nothing connected with the party, he listened attentively to a conversation on the subject of educating the working classes, held between his neighbour the clergyman, and his partner, Mr. Fynch.

It was impossible all this while for Diana Bell and her sister to leave the kitchen together, and equally impossible for the spinster to convince the matron, that her presence was required in any place where baking and buttering were not going on. At last the tea-making commenced, under the management of Diana, and Martha reluctantly repaired to her guests.

It seemed to Rosa as if her mother had chosen all the colours of the rainbow to adorn herself in for that evening, and that with some of the most brilliant her own complexion was contending for mastery. The air was sultry too, and the room well filled, and this was the first breathing time

Martha Bell had allowed herself for many hours. She, therefore, did breathe in puffs, rather than gentle respirations, doubled down her cuffs, jerked off a crumb of toast from her sleeve, and tried to sit still, and not think about her tea-service, and her bread and butter. But in spite of her philosophy, no sooner had the door opened, and a jingle of crockery announced that Phebe was coming, than she almost started from her seat, nor could the questions or comments of her guests engage her attention for one moment, until the buxom damsel had again retreated, stooping nearly double, in order the better to sustain her burden.

Thus far too all went well; and the great business of tea-drinking having been discussed, the spinster again glided into the room, looking wholly disengaged from what was left behind; while her sister took the very earliest opportunity of escape, to go and see that Phebe broke nothing, wasted nothing, and did not give the plum-cake to the men-servants.

The forebodings of all the party being at last realized by a steeping shower, which rendered it impossible to walk in the garden, and cards having never been admitted beneath the roof of Peter Bell, it became highly necessary to think of some means of beguiling the time. Rosa's piano stood temptingly before her, but she could not ask herself to play, and no one seemed aware of her capability. At last, however, she bethought her of a plan by which

the desired result was effectually accomplished. Miss Scott, who had been one year at a public school, was pressed by Rosa to gratify the company. She did so, by playing a few country dances, and in her turn requested that Rosa would do the same. In an instant Frederick Fynch was by her side. Like herself, he was a considerable proficient in music, and wished for nothing so much as an opportunity of display, though at the same time that he protested, his intention, his capability, his wish, was to do nothing more than turn over the leaves of the music-book, he took care to turn them over in such a way as to present a fashionable air, in which he considered himself perfect.

Rosa was delighted to find a companion whose taste accorded with hers; and, little less confident of her own powers, they began.

After once ascertaining the harmony of their voices, and each admiring their mutual skill and execution, it became a matter of curious speculation when they would think proper to cease. Nor was this calculation wholly absent from the mind of George Gordon, who, perhaps because he thought the music of Rosa's voice unrivalled by all the melodies in nature, would much rather it had been silent for that evening, than blended with another, and that other the voice of Frederick Fynch.

A hint from aunt Dinah at last awoke her niece to a painful suspicion that she might have played too long; and rising from the piano, she blushed

and looked so beautiful, that her companion, perceiving a bright sunset had succeeded to the shower, proposed a walk in the garden, to all who were not afraid of the damp grass.

Perhaps, had the whole truth been told, a much greater number would have been afraid of the damp air for their curls; but despite this important consideration, backed by the fears of Mrs. Fynch, and the intreaties of Diana, a party of young people escaped into the open air, some glad to exchange the close atmosphere of the parlour for the freshness and beauty of an evening in June, and some proud to exhibit the indifference with which they could risk their silk stockings, and satin slippers. Of this number was Rosa, and in one of her wildest moods, she trod with her light airy step amongst the thick long grass, where none of her companions were adventurous enough to follow—we should have said none but Frederick Fynch, for the ladies were all left behind, and George Gordon was either out of humour, or out of spirits, nobody could tell why.

“What a happy creature Rosa is,” said Alice to her brother, as a light-hearted laugh, mingled with remonstrances half in jest, and half in earnest, issued from the adjoining shrubbery.

“If you dare me to it, I will,” said the voice of Frederick Fynch, and it was evident the daring deed had been done, for the next moment Rosa was seen running in breathless haste, until, hopeless of

escape from her pursuer, she leaned against the stem of an accacia, and laughingly intreated him to spare her.

"I told you what I would do," exclaimed the exulting youth, and seizing the lowest branch of the tree, and bending it from himself, he shook such a shower from its pendent leaves, as drove poor Rosa once more from her resting place, while she dashed the rain-drops from her dripping garments, and protested with the most perfect good humour, that she did not care the least for a shower-bath.

While this was passing, George Gordon had darted forward without a moment's thought, and placing his strong hand upon the breast of young Fynch, had given him such a thrust, as sent him reeling from the tree to settle down, after staggering a few paces back, into the centre of a laurel-bush, from which he arose almost as wet, and a good deal more angry than his fair friend.

Whatever the youth had thought of his white trowsers before, they now, in their soiled and forlorn condition, formed the subject of his meditations for the rest of the evening, and afforded his anxious mother a plea for making an early retreat from what she considered a very dull, and vulgar party.

No sooner, however, did the first mention of going away escape her lips, than she was requested to wait one moment; and Mrs. Bell, hurrying out of

the room, a bustle took place almost equal to that which preceded the entrance of the tea-tray.

In due time the door was again thrown wide open, while a jerk at Phebe's elbow produced an alarming jingle amongst the brimfull glasses she was about to present. The sound having startled the occupants of the parlour, every ear was turned to listen, when the distant and earnest voice of Martha Bell was heard pronouncing her often-repeated, and now last charge—"You understand what you are about, Phebe? The foreign wine to Mrs. Fynch,—the raisin to Miss Scotts,—and see you turn the tray a little, so that they don't take wrong."

The poor Misses Scott had hitherto lived in happy ignorance of their own inferiority, and the blank look of consternation with which they seemed to be appealing to the justice of the public under their unprecedented insult, catching the quick eye of Rosa, she was seized with symptoms of an internal giggle, which required more than her accustomed self-discipline to subdue. She was, besides, a good deal excited by her frolic in the garden, from which she was suffering more than any one but herself had the least idea of, for she had dashed off the rain drops so quickly from her luxuriant hair, and so skilfully eluded all attempts to touch her garments, by way of ascertaining whether they were really wet, that the affair had passed off without

any of her young companions suspecting the risk she was really incurring. The twilight of evening too favoured her, and she wished her friends good night with a cheek as blooming, and an eye as bright, as if she could defy the power of the elements to visit her with chilness or blight.

"I am glad they are all gone," said Peter Bell with a deep sigh, as soon as the door had closed after George Gordon, who had lingered last in order that he might prevail upon Rosa to take off her wet shoes, and go to bed as soon as possible. "I am glad they are all gone," repeated the father, as he drew his arm around his daughter's neck, "and now, while your mother and aunt are clearing away, do you come and sit down beside me, and sing to me before we go to rest, not one of those fine songs you sung with Frederick Fynch but a hymn, or something of that quiet kind, for I shall hardly feel as if this was my own house, until I have my own people with their own ways about me again."

Peter Bell was not, properly speaking, a religious man, but he was a fervent lover of that social concord and domestic comfort, of which religion is the only sure foundation, and little dreaming of the danger to which his child was exposed, or the sacrifice she was making to gratify his request, he sat with a composed and peaceful spirit to listen to the following words :—

Evening dew's are gently falling,
Evening glories gild the west,
Birds with folded wing, are calling
Home the wanderers to their rest.

Lengthening now across the meadows,
Where the flocks no longer stray,
Softly steal the evening shadows,
O'er the steps of parting day.

Silence reigns o'er moor, and mountain,
Silence through the verdant vale ;
Save where some melodious fountain
Tells its never ending tale—

Tells of stars, that nightly shining,
Lend their brightness to its breast—
Tells, and tells without repining,
How its waters know no rest.

Is there then no voice of sorrow ?
Not one murmur in the blast ?
No foreboding for the morrow ?
No lamenting o'er the past ?

Child of tears, it is thy wailing,
Thine alone that meets mine ear ;
Whence thy grief, when all prevailing
Love, and peace are mingling here ?

Whence thy grief ? It is thy blessing,—
Thine alone, with conscious eye,
To look around thee, still confessing,
God is here, in earth, and sky.

Child of tears ! thou art not slighted,
In the record of his love ;
Though perchance awhile benighted,
Seest thou not the star above ?

Know'st thou not the gracious message,
Sent to all the sons of care ?
Heed not then the darkest presage,—
God is present everywhere.

CHAPTER V.

A TEDIOUS and alarming illness, acknowledged by every one but Rosa to have been induced by severe cold, was the natural consequence of her imprudence on the evening of the party; and never did the amiable qualities of her heart appear more conspicuous, than when pain and weakness confined her to the house through the long days of a dull cold winter.

"You praise me for my patience," she would often say, "but you do not consider how little it is tried. Have I not every wish anticipated by my kind mother, and does not Alice come every day and read to me with her sweet low voice, that, in spite of the agreeable books she chooses, sometimes soothes me to sleep?"

There was, besides, another source of interest in her father's family, of which Rosa did not feel quite so free to speak. George Gordon, after making all the progress that could be desired in the different qualifications intended to fit him for the

church, had at last disappointed his father's hopes, by declaring that he did not feel himself called to a pastoral life, and that without a strong sense that such was his duty, he could not,—dared not,—even to gratify his father's wishes, take upon himself the responsible office of a minister of the gospel. Taught as he had been to believe, that in order to fill the high station of a minister faithfully before the sight of man and God, a devotedness of heart, which could only be derived from a belief in its being an especial duty, was necessary, there was no reasoning against his objections; and when he had firmly and deliberately made choice of the humble occupation of a farmer, his parents were not long in deciding upon the eligibility of placing him with Peter Bell; not because they thought him or his wife particularly calculated to enlighten the understanding of their son, except in the practical part of his education, but because the situation of the farm would afford him an opportunity of spending most of his hours at home, where his reading and his favourite studies could be continued, without encroaching upon the time required by the more urgent claims of business.

It seemed, however, to his family, either that his leisure hours were extremely few, or that the farm-house possessed more attractions than they could well understand; for it was seldom that George found time, as he acknowledged, to spend his evenings at home. Nor need it be explained

to the young reader how they were spent,—how, at the dark hour when he returned to the house, fully discharged from all the avocations of the day, there remained a long quiet evening at his disposal, with Rosa Bell, beautiful, languid, but ever cheerful, so dependent upon his reading and his conversation, that a heart less kind than his could scarcely have refused the pleasing task of endeavouring to beguile her thoughts from weariness and pain.

Rosa had grown more serious, and consequently more interesting during her illness. Her exuberant spirits were in some degree worn down by long confinement. She read more studiously, thought more deeply, and sometimes the result of these thoughts was, that if God would give her strength again,—if her mother were but a different kind of woman,—if she herself had had a less excellent education,—if Alice Gordon would always live near them, and George in the same house, she did not know, but she might yet turn her mind to settling down at home; and had the present winter brought no troubles more distressing than her own illness, it is quite possible she might have acted upon these new and not unpleasing notions.

But this winter the prices of all farming produce were ruinously low, and with an increase of expenditure, Peter Bell found it increasingly difficult to raise the necessary sum for his annual rent. Some grievous losses, too, weighed heavily upon his spirits. He had been nursing up two favourite cows to gain

him credit, if they did nothing more, at an approaching cattle show, and both had died before the time of exhibition. The pride of his flock of sheep had also been swept away by a ravaging disease, and when he applied for assistance to his friend at Glossom, he was told that the villa and the manufactory were both undergoing a thorough repair, that Mrs. Fynch had taken her physician's advice to spend the winter in Devonshire, and that the purchase of a commission in the army for Frederick, had cost twice the sum at first calculated upon.

"Only for poor Rosa," said Peter Bell, as he rode home, "it would be a thing of little consequence to Martha and me; and perhaps, when the spring comes, and she recovers her health, something may be done in the way of her obtaining comforts for herself."

Long before the return of spring, Rosa's excellent constitution began to exhibit symptoms of recovery from its past shock; but such was the pleasure her temporary dependence afforded those who loved her best, that they were almost sorry to find their kind attentions no longer needed, and perhaps for this very reason continued them longer than was conducive to her lasting good.

"You will spoil the girl entirely," was the frequent remonstrance of Martha Bell with her young friends; and all the while she was studying her tastes, her appetites, and her fancies, with an assi-

duity that left nothing untried which kindness could suggest, or money could procure.

"If she had been brought up like one of us," was the fond mother's constant plea, "she might have done as we do; but with such an education, and such talents, poor thing! it would be a sin and a shame to make but little of her now."

And in truth, this principle was acted upon to its fullest extent; for there was something about Rosa, nobody could exactly tell what, that in spite of a thousand faults, won the hearts of all around her. It might be her frankness,—her beauty,—her grace,—her accomplishments. No, it was none of these individually, but a blending of all together, with a sweet womanly dependence,—an *abandonment* (we should say, if the English application of the word could be made to give place to its more refined and agreeable signification),—which threw her so completely upon the good-will, the affection, and the forgiveness of others; that while her friends were perfectly alive to all her defects, and fully acquainted with her numerous transgressions, they loved her the more for having exposed them so freely to their censure.

And yet this young, undisciplined, and fondly cherished creature, was about to be sent forth into the world, amongst those who would take no pains to understand her character, still less to smooth the asperities of their own in consideration to its tender points. She was about to offer in the mart,

where human intellect is purchased at the lowest possible rate of pecuniary cost, those mental faculties which nature had given as a blessing, but which education seemed to have been struggling to convert into a curse. She was about to launch her frail bark upon the troubled ocean of life, to combat with the strength of adverse gales, with unknown currents, and tumultuous waves, under no safer guidance than her own strong will, her unpractised judgment, and uncertain aims.

The spring was advancing, and Rosa's reviving strength seemed to keep pace with the universal progress of renovated nature. Still she was too delicate to enter upon an ordinary situation, and her kind patronizing aunt Dinah had not yet met with one sufficiently unexceptionable to be proposed to the acceptance of her niece.

Peter Bell's youngest sister had, at an early age, married a respectable tradesman in a small country town in the south of England ; and, in consequence of their repeated invitations, it was thought desirable to try the effect of change of air, in the hope that a total restoration to health might render the young governess more fit for the arduous undertaking which awaited her. The journey would unavoidably be an expensive one, but Rosa had been educated for a governess, and every thing must be done to facilitate the design.

Mr. and Mrs. Kingston, the uncle and aunt to whose care the invalid was about to be committed,

had educated their daughters for the same laudable purpose ; but the extreme delicacy of their constitutions had hitherto kept them at home, though the constant attendance of a medical practitioner, with all the indulgences of inactivity and false refinement, rendered the benefit of their own exertions increasingly desirable.

Rosa knew little of her cousins, except through the medium of long sentimental letters ; but the melancholy tone in which they always alluded to their own privations, the sadness they described, the degradations of their home, and the bitter portion which they considered as allotted to them in life, interested her deeply, and she longed to share, and perhaps alleviate their griefs.

Keenly as Rosa felt the necessity of leaving a home now doubly endeared to her, the affectionate adieus of Alice Gordon and her brother George had scarcely died away upon her ear, before she began to think, with a pensive kind of pleasure, of the books she would be likely to read with the Kingstons, the music they would play together, and all the soul-absorbing feelings they would communicate and share.

It was a little repugnant to Rosa's prejudices to be set down at the entrance of an ironmonger's shop, with the name of Kingston in broad gilt letters glaring above ; but after looking in vain for a front-door, she consigned herself to the cordial welcome of her uncle, who came out to meet her

with his apron girded round his waist; and while he received, with his own hand, her numerous bags and boxes in their rapid descent from the coach, her aunt, with a baby in her arms, stood waiting for the elegant traveller in the shop.

It is not uncommon for the children of tradesmen, accustomed to town habits, and imbued with a feeling of importance derived from their greater facility in the means of living, as they would say, *genteelly*, to speak of country people with disdain, and to look upon the riding-habits, boots, spurs, and old-fashioned hats that weekly throng the market-place in which they live, as so many indications of a grade of society immeasurably below themselves; but for real, intense, ineffable contempt, their feelings fall far short of those with which an over-educated, somewhat sentimental farmer's daughter, can look around her upon the whole paraphernalia of a shop, through which she has to pass to the, perhaps not inelegant, drawing-room of her host.

Rosa felt a little too much of this for her own comfort, as she followed her aunt up stairs; but no sooner was the door of the apartment, usually occupied by her cousins, thrown open, than the whole scene was changed as if by the touch of a magician's wand. What would Mrs. Fynch have said or thought, had she been told, that a moderate-sized room immediately above an ironmonger's shop, bore any resemblance to her own in its claims

to elegance or taste. But so it was, or rather so it appeared to be on the first view. There were after-examinations that revealed an economy of expenditure in the way of ornament, of which Mrs. Fynch would have been the last to be guilty. There were vases of Bristol-board contrived to look like marble, and so placed as to elude the touch; mock flowers in rich profusion, made of every material but such as Flora works with; scent-jars of Dresden china,—no, of brown earthenware, painted and plastered with sprigs cut out of calico curtains; and rugs and ottomans worked at school; home-made fringe; pictures by nobody knew whom, accepted in payment of a hopeless debt; and a green parrot, that mocked and chattered all day long in a gilded cage.

Such was the real state of things within the apartment, but all was so well contrived, adjusted, and set the bright side outwards, that the first impression was exceedingly imposing, and it was evident to every one acquainted with the circumstances of the family, that aunt Dinah had been here, as well as at Waterton Farm.

That Mr. Kingston should have had anything to do with the embellishment of his own house, was a thing beyond all calculation, not only because his looks and manners were little calculated to embellish any place, but because there were traces of deep anxious care in his honest homely countenance, accompanied with an unsettlement of face and person, which precluded all possibility of his

thoughts being turned to mere embellishment, and conveyed the idea of his features, as well as his head and hands, being occupied in working for their daily sustenance.

The fact was, the man was poor, and had worked for the last forty years, with no happier result than that of seeing himself surrounded with ten helpless children, haunted by the conviction that each annual stock-taking found his expenditure increased in an inverse ratio to his means, and that if his life was spared, the next forty years would in all probability be spent in the same way as the last.

Nothing could more clearly indicate the slavery of soul under which he laboured, than his magnanimous smile when he bowed away the fastidious customers who would not buy, measuring itself out until they reached the door, expanding again if they looked round, and then vanishing with their departing steps, as if nothing but a dull dead look of utter destitution had ever been written on his face.

We will not deny that even Mr. Kingston had his pleasures. There was the one day of rest, in which he walked out with his six children, and provided Tommy did not cry, nor Lucy step into the channel and splash her clean white frock, nor Harry turn restive because his new shoes pinched his feet, nor James and Mary fight, nor Prudence eat laburnum seeds,—if none of these events occurred, nor others equally probable and equally destruc-

tive of enjoyment, the good man might return, congratulating himself upon the privilege of being a husband and a father.

There was the meeting with his fellow-townsmen too, at the Crown and Anchor, and the election,—the glorious election, when he might at least enjoy the importance of having his vote solicited, though he felt in secret bitterness, the necessity of giving it against his conscience, to please his landlord, and the majority of his customers.

Yes, even James Kingston, the ironmonger, had his pleasures; and it is equally probable his wife had hers, though to all who witnessed her panting pilgrimages, performed with unremitting assiduity from her cellar-kitchen to her drawing-room above the shop, and her nursery one story higher, it might well have been matter of curious speculation as to what these pleasures were. Her poor shrivelled, fretful countenance revealed nothing that could lead to a suspicion of their existence. Weariness and wasted health alone were legible there. Though when Mrs. Kingston could find time for conversation, she was a rational and humble-minded woman, whose situation, though it seldom wrung from her one word of complaint, was the more affecting from the simplicity and self-abasement with which she bore its accumulated ills.

Nor were her elegant and helpless daughters, who occupied the drawing-room, altogether so heartless and unfeeling as their total abstraction

from all domestic duties would have led the mere observer to suppose. They loved their dear mamma with the most sincere affection, and pitied her from their very souls. But this was all. After having received an education such as theirs, that they could be required to share any of her burdens, was an idea that never entered their minds, except to be immediately discarded, either as too unpalatable, or too absurd to meet with a moment's attention. Neither was their mother a woman likely to require them to do any thing so decidedly at variance with their tastes and wishes. She had no selfishness ; and feeling that she could bear for the future, what she had borne for the past, she had pursued that system in the education of her daughters, which she believed best calculated to promote their good, independent of her own.

And now Rosa Bell was presented to her cousins, and they rose from their Italian, their music, and their crayons, to receive her,—all but Emma Kingston, the second daughter, who being condemned to an inclined plane, under the calamity of being treated for a spinal complaint, could only extend her snow white hand, and welcome the long-wished-for stranger, with a sweet sad smile, that told at once how gladly she would have performed her share of active duty, had her amiable mind ever been impressed with a sense of its imperative necessity.

Nor was Emma the only invalid. An elegant

sort of languor pervaded the manners of the whole trio, who had already passed through the last stage of preparation for governesses, and only waited for invigorated health, or the offer of situations in which there would be nothing to do, before they turned their backs upon a home already regarded as degrading, and broke off all association with the vulgar means by which their father earned their daily bread.

Amongst other indulgences, too liberally granted them by their parents, was the constant attendance of an intelligent young doctor; and it is probable he found his leisure hours glide pleasantly away in their society, for they were really accomplished, and tolerably well read. A more disinterested doctor, who understood the moral as well as the physical constitution of man, would have ordered one of them into the shop to wait upon her father's customers, another into the nursery, and a third into the kitchen, thus affording poor Mrs. Kingston the often wished-for, and often needed opportunity, of changing her cap, and recovering her breath.

We do not presume to say that this bitter pill should have been administered at once, and without preparation; but we have little hesitation in saying, that if young ladies would bend their minds, or if parents would bend them, to seek enjoyment in assisting others, rather than in being assisted themselves, there would not only be fewer

head aches, and spinal affections, but what is of infinitely more importance, fewer repinings against the designs of Providence in portioning out the individual lot of His creatures.

Rosa Bell sat down with her cousins, well pleased with their looks and manners, and extremely willing to forget those of her uncle and aunt, as well as the passage by which she had found her way to the drawing-room; and had there been no descending to meals, where all were waited upon by one servant, where the children, even to the very baby graced,—or as it might happen, disgraced their father's board, and where the apprentices swallowed down large mouthfuls of thick half-cooked slices, peculiar to the plates of apprentices, holding themselves in readiness to fly off at every tinkle of a little thin-voiced, but imperative bell, it is possible that Rosa might have been tempted to prolong her stay with the Kingstons, longer than the three weeks first proposed for the time of her visit.

Indeed, for every thing but the lightness of heart, and love of mirth inherent in her nature, Rosa would have found her cousins perfectly congenial companions. Here, however, they were at fault; for a sense of degradation, weariness, and poverty hung about their sensitive minds, and seemed perpetually to check the outbursts of the natural joy of youth, until at last they had forgot to laugh; and this very want, combined with that of green fields and fresh air, and exercise, threatened to

produce any thing but beneficial effects upon the health and spirits of Rosa Bell.

It is true, her cousins had copied out all the most touching passages of Moore and Byron,—that they could play all fashionable airs,—and had drawn more woods, mountains, and smooth lakes, than they had ever seen ; but there was a most unpleasing anomaly in all these efforts of their tastes, ingenuity, and skill, separated as they were by but a few inches of board and ceiling from a hardware shop—a most uncomfortable contrast between the indulgence and the languor of her cousins' drawing-room ; and the labour, the heat, and the tumult of their mother's department ; with a still more melancholy combination of feelings arising from the weak helplessness, and morbid refinement of the young creatures around her, threatened as they were with the aggravated evils of poverty and vulgar association.

“ But you will not leave us so soon,” said Emma Kingston, when her cousin talked of going away, while a tear stood in her soft blue eye. “ It is so seldom we find any really companionable being to stay with us ; life is so wearisome to me too ; you should have a little consideration for a poor creature in my situation.”

“ For us all, I think,” observed her elder sister ; “ we are indeed a luckless family, shut out from all enjoyments common to the rest of the world.”

“ You have your favourite pursuits,” replied

Rosa, "and each other's society; I have no sister."

"No, but you have that sweet Alice Gordon, of whom you talk so much, and her delightful, romantic brother. I am sure I should be in love with him at once."

Rosa smiled; for at the mention of the word romantic, the picture of George Gordon, in his farmer's dress, rose up before her mental vision, and she thought how much easier it is for the fancy to embellish another's portion than our own.

"George Gordon is very homely, and unpretending," said she. "You know he is a farmer."

"A farmer? Yes; a gentleman farmer, of course."

"No, you are quite wrong;—a practical, a hard-working farmer."

"What! does he look like those hideous young men who walk about the town on a market-day, with boots and spurs?"

"No, not exactly like them; and yet I dare say he would look very much the same to you. But I never could describe George Gordon; he is so sensible and delicate, and yet so strong and manly."

"Athletic, I suppose you mean. Has he coarse hands?"

"I am afraid he has; but he reads well, and has taste to choose his books, as well as read them."

"Well, that is something; but I never could

bear to hear a man read, who held his book in a great red hand."

Rosa felt almost indignant at this minute examination of George Gordon's claims to unlimited admiration; and, little as she was disposed to question the propriety of her own notions of refinement and vulgarity, she sometimes thought those held by her cousins were exceedingly misplaced; so much so, that she was half in the mind to give them a little advice on the folly of people holding themselves above their situation; but the arrival of an important letter about this time, put all other considerations to flight.

It was from a young lady with whom she had been intimately acquainted at school, and contained a pressing invitation for Rosa, whose delicate health the family exceedingly deplored, to spend a few weeks with them at their charming residence in the south of England.

Nothing ever occurred within the sphere of the Kingstons' observation, without awakening a train of gloomy associations connected with their own hard lot. If the sun shone brightly, it seemed to illuminate every home but theirs; if the seasons changed from cold to genial, they thought how delightful such changes must be in the country, and to people privileged to enjoy them; or if any great question of national good was settled satisfactorily to the community at large, they only

looked upon themselves the more as isolated beings, shut out from participation in the blessings of Providence. Indeed, such was the uniform tendency of their feelings, and such the tone of their conversation, that Rosa, before one entire week had been spent in their society, became unspeakably weary of their constant gloom. In vain did she propose to them a change of occupation, a new book, or a fresh study. They had tried all occupations but that of being useful;—the new books were always engaged at the library before they sent for them;—and what was the use of studying, when they were doomed to helplessness and poverty for the rest of their lives?

Nor were the entreaties of Rosa, that they would try the benefit of exercise in the open air, at all more availing. It always rained when they walked out, or they were weary before they reached the outskirts of the town. No.—They knew their portion in this world. They were born to suffer. They did not wish to trouble any one with their complaints, but sometimes they did think, if the world knew what they were enduring, they should be treated with more tenderness and consideration.

And thus they would transform the world into a malicious monster, whose purpose was to thwart and baffle them, and finally to trample them down. They would quote all that the most dolorous and sentimental of our poets have said about this monster, believing that the minds of such writers alone

held sympathy with theirs, and while rapt in visions of a sublime and distant happiness, from which they believed themselves excluded by a malevolent fate (they dared not say by the Author of their lives), they were, in fact, as effectually separated from the simple and rational enjoyments of life, as if they had in reality been born under the curse they were deploring.

It was not difficult for Rosa to tear herself away from the entreaties of such companions, for she was still possessed of a joyous, unsubdued, and buoyant spirit, to which their society was oppressive in the extreme. The world appeared to her no monster, but a flattering and inviting friend, whose liberal promises she longed to prove. Already in anticipation she loved the world, and casting herself upon its bosom, feared neither falsehood nor repulse.

Happy they who keep the safe medium between these two extremes,—by whom the world is neither loved, nor hated, but regarded as a school of discipline, where all that is essential to our eternal happiness is to be learned,—as a field of warfare, where all that would interpose between us and Heaven is to be overcome,—as a plentiful harvest, in which all that we are able to enjoy of the mercy and beneficence of our eternal Father is to be reaped !

CHAPTER VI.

ROSA BELL felt more satisfaction than she could well have accounted for, in finding that the friends at whose welcome invitation she bade adieu to her invalid cousins, occupied an elegant cottage situated within a few miles of a fashionable bathing-place on the southern coast of England. Her unpractised eye had often admired the style of the villa at Glossom, but in comparison with Mrs. Grafton's cottage, it would have sunk into nothing,—mere baby work, admirable only to those who had seen nothing better. Here all was consistent, and when Rosa was presented to the richly dressed widow, and her two dignified daughters, she felt a kind of awe steal over her, which she had never known before, except perhaps occasionally in the company of Mrs. Gordon.

“ Well, I shall learn a great deal with these people,” said she, after being shown into her own room, not altogether cheered into happiness with the warmth of her reception. “ I shall read a

great deal too, and that will be of use to me," for her quick eye had caught sight of a vast display of books, many of which were enclosed in the neat white cover, indicative of their belonging to those book societies, whose weekly overflowings inundate the parlours and book-shelves of professedly literary people.

In fact, the Graftons, all three of them, old and young, were literary ladies, not mere dabblers in literature, but readers of all kinds of deep books; and no sooner was their favourite topic touched upon, than they set themselves to prove how thoroughly they were initiated in physics, and metaphysics, in the progress of science, the construction of language, the nature of man, and the philosophy of everything.

Miss Grafton had her laboratory, where she spent her mornings, and gave lectures to a girl's school once a week. Miss Ellen also had her pupils, though of a poorer class, and these she was content to enlighten simply with the knowledge of physiology, and the general laws by which animated nature is governed; while the mother, qualified alike to superintend every department of learning, but believing it her province to be more extensive and less definite in her communications, told all she knew, and sometimes a *little more*, in every select and favoured coterie where she presided.

"This is just what I wanted," said Rosa to herself, on once more returning to her room, though

it is possible, with no extravagant degree of satisfaction in the acknowledgment. "This is just what I wanted. I shall learn the names of all the books that have been written in the last ten years, and perhaps a little of their contents too, just enough to talk about, and qualify me for acquitting myself with credit in literary society." And Rosa counted upon her fingers some score of celebrated authors, whose writings she found herself already able to distinguish by a few such phrases as profound research, biblical knowledge, critical acumen, skilful handling of the subject, originality of thought, power of language, and a vast variety of expressions, too well known to mere talkers about books, to need enumeration here, but all tending to prove that the volumes to which they apply, have been rather looked into, than read.

It was very natural that the Graftons, with their love of acquiring and imparting information, should be extremely dissatisfied with the absence of book-knowledge betrayed so unreservedly by their young friend, for Rosa had not yet learned to be ashamed of not possessing what circumstances had afforded her no opportunity of obtaining. She therefore expressed, with perfect ingenuousness, her sincere admiration of their superior attainments, and her ardent wish to be instructed in what they knew. Perhaps had she known exactly what this wish would have brought upon her, she might have been less sanguine, for so free were the Graftons from the

narrow-minded desire of monopoly, that they rejoiced with threefold gladness, over the opportunity thus afforded them, of filling up a blank unfurnished mind, from the superabundance of their own mental stores.

Mind was their acknowledged idol—the march of intellect the glory of their lives; but sometimes Rosa thought she detected a little stray attention bestowed upon the embellishment of persons by no means naturally attractive, as well as upon the rigid observance of that important line which separates the aristocracy from the vulgar; and it was but natural when making such observations to ask, if mind were all, whence such distinctions in society, as place ignorance and rank where the two happen to be united, in the highest degree of exaltation above poverty and knowledge. These anomalies, however, she was willing to leave for future examination, and equally willing to refer them to some law of human nature yet to be explained.

Pleased with their benevolent task, as well as with the ready and retentive mind of their pupil, the Graftons earnestly pressed Rosa to prolong her stay; and she, perhaps pleased equally with the situation of their residence, the restoration of her own health, and the *style* of everything around her, felt no scruples too powerful to be overcome.

It would be useless, however, to pretend that she was quite congenially situated, or that the home of

the Graftons, with their society, imposing as it was, would have been sufficient to satisfy her taste and inclinations. This family had, however, on the plea of doing good,—of introducing a more rational style of conversation into general society, and raising the tone of the human mind, connected themselves with an extensive circle of friends, with whom they exchanged visits, which occurred in succession almost as often as the day. Nor were the subjects of conversation on these occasions exclusively of their own choosing. Rosa found ample opportunity for indulging her turn for laughter, and her love of mere entertainment unknown to them, and she had besides an opportunity equally important, of displaying her musical powers, and demanding that immediate applause, which her own accomplishments, even more than the superior wisdom of her friends, was calculated to call forth?

“Who is that beautiful young creature?” was the universal inquiry of the gentlemen, whenever Rosa left the instrument, while the Graftons knew better than to say that their charming friend was intended for a governess; and thus the very name of her future calling was suppressed, and Rosa was beginning to look with envy upon those privileges of wealth and station which exclude the necessity of such a degradation.

Devoted as the Graftons were to the study and the culture of the human mind, both in themselves and others, Rosa became daily more convinced that

personal advantages possessed an almost equal degree of importance in their estimation, and whenever her own unquestionable superiority in that sphere of excellence won the attentions even of the idle and the gay, it was not difficult to perceive that a cloud was cast upon the sapient brows of the Graftons. Nor was this discovery without interest or satisfaction to her, who scrupled not by many a little feminine artifice, to place herself in strong relief beside her friends.

"They have their field of science and philosophy," said she to herself, "why should they grudge me a field of my own?—inferior to theirs, it is true, but yet sufficiently exalted for my ambition."

And in the spirit of defiance, Rosa struck the harp with tenfold energy, and danced, and dressed, and flirted with a studious desire to please, and a full conviction that she did so.

It was in one of her walks along a fashionable promenade, with Laura and Ellen Grafton, that Rosa caught the eye of a young officer, whose countenance, even at the first glance, strongly reminded her of home, and brought suddenly back a long train of familiar associations. Another turn enabled her to make more decided observations, and Lieutenant Frederick Fynch stood before her in all the grace and majesty of regimentals.

His tall and agile figure was well calculated to display, to the greatest advantage, the costume which had undoubtedly been the moving cause

why he had chosen the army for his profession, and pledged himself to fight his country's battles. Nor is it unworthy of observation, that amongst the vast variety of motives which draw mankind together to perform their fatal part upon the theatre of carnage and death, the privilege of wearing regimentals is by no means the least potent, or rare.

The lively expressions of surprise,—of greetings, and reminiscences, which passed between Rosa and her young friend were considerably heightened in interest, by a mutual perception of what time had done for both since they last met, under circumstances by no means so gratifying to their vanity as the present.

Rosa was still well dressed, but more womanly; at the same time that she was more fashionably easy; and above all, she was evidently in the most *unexceptionable society*. Frederick was the same, for he leaned upon the arm of a brother officer, whom he introduced as Major Bond,—a middle-sized man of easy manners, and gentlemanly address.

Rosa might have noticed, if she would, that while he adverted to their former acquaintance, he made no inquiry relating to her parents, their mutual neighbours, or any circumstance that might not immediately or remotely tend to increase the idea of his own importance and high station in society, that on every possible occasion, and frequently without occasion at all, he alluded to the

villa, to his mother's residence in Devonshire, and to his own extreme difficulty in refusing any of the numerous invitations pressed upon him, without giving serious offence. But Rosa would not, could not, see any anything besides the handsome figure by her side, and the attention his regimentals excited in the passing groups of idlers, less favoured than herself.

It was scarcely possible for any one possessing the least advantages of education, to be farther removed from the walks of philosophy and abstract literature than Lieutenant Frederick Fynch; and Rosa, in the midst of her idle gossip with him, turned often to her friends, to ascertain what degree of disapprobation marked their looks. It was a degree even beyond what she had anticipated, and when at last compelled to wish her companion a good morning, she felt strong forebodings that the remaining hours of the day would be spent less pleasantly than in the promenade.

A serious lecture from Miss Grafton on light manners and trifling conversation, occupied nearly the whole of the afternoon, and in the evening Mrs. Grafton, informed no doubt of the offences of the morning, repeated all that her daughter had said, with a few sage comments of her own, winding up the whole, by reading an elaborate discourse on the immortality of the soul.

On the following morning, to Rosa's infinite amusement, and partial consternation, the name of

Lieutenant Fynch was announced, amongst the numerous callers at Laurel Cottage, and with easy effrontery the young gentleman presented himself immediately after this announcement, in the very centre of Mrs. Grafton's elegant saloon.

The young ladies moved coldly, their mother not at all, while Rosa, blushing from her suppressed desire to laugh, incurred the suspicion of blushing from a deeper cause. Nor was her amusement lessened on finding her hero in no way daunted, or her admiration decreased by the perfect self-possession with which he addressed himself, on common-place topics, sometimes to herself, and sometimes to the indignant ladies, whose averted faces reddened with kindling wrath.

Her entertainment, however, was of short duration. No sooner had the gay young soldier made his bow, than the storm burst upon her head, and scarcely could Miss Grafton's own galvanic battery have been more direful or convulsive in its effects; for vacillating between vexation and laughter, we are sorry to say, that Rosa acquitted herself about as badly as she could.

At last, vexation gained the mastery, and rising from her chair with the air of an insulted queen, she informed Mrs. Grafton that her visit, which she found had already been too long, should be terminated with all possible despatch.

Nothing could have been farther from the thoughts

of her friends than such a conclusion. They looked at each other in blank amazement, and "No, no," echoed from every lip.

The fact was, being ladies of extreme benevolence, they had wished Rosa to stay for her own advantage. They had wished to improve, enlarge, and elevate her mind, and the more prone they saw she was to sink into a state of mental degradation, the more need there was that her visit should be prolonged.

"No, no," she must not leave them yet. They had no idea of the kind. Edwards on the Will was only half read through. Miss Grafton was preparing a series of chemical experiments for the following week, and the book-meeting at Mrs. Bloomfield's was a point of interest, which Rosa, if she valued her own good, ought not to lose sight of.

In this manner they succeeded in convincing her, that for some reason or other, she was at a loss to imagine what, they did really wish her to stay, and inclination being on the side of their arguments, she consented to lay aside her indignation, and the startling proposition it had called forth.

Two dark dull days passed after this ebullition of feeling, during which Rosa was compelled to read aloud for her own benefit, and not once permitted to walk on the promenade; but an engagement for the third, to meet a party at which she had

some secret hope that Frederick Fynch would be present, helped considerably to cheer her drooping spirits.

At this party, the star of the evening was an authoress, whose lawful name of simple Sarah Smith had been exchanged for the adopted one of *Angelina de Lacy*, by which she was known in young ladies' albums, and puffed in advertisements of forthcoming annuals.

Rosa had never seen an authoress, and when she found the ladies and gentlemen pressing past one another to obtain a glimpse of the phenomenon, she, too, peeped, and beheld a large languid-looking woman, reclining on a sofa, with her hair arranged in Grecian style, and her figure wrapped in loose drapery, that seemed to flow around, rather than rest upon her person.

Struck alike with the magnificence of the spectacle, and the extreme deference, as readily yielded by one party, as it was openly demanded by the other, Rosa very naturally inquired *what* Angelina de Lacy had written.

"Oh, an immense deal!" was the reply.

"But what?"

"Those sweet lines in the 'Keepsake,' on a broken heart. Indeed, she writes for all the annuals."

"And for nothing else?"

"Yes, many things. Some people think she writes the critical notices in the 'Literary Gazette;'

and have you not seen that charming series of engravings, illustrated by her?"

Rosa's curiosity was satisfied, but she amused herself not the less, by observing the movements of the phenomenon, who turned her head, smiled, waved her hand, and performed all the evolutions of a *character*, with the conscious importance of one who is sitting for a picture, and who, whenever she spoke, delivered herself in short sentences, with an impressive pause between, as if to allow the reporters time to make their notes. In short, the *distinguished woman*—the *authoress*, was written in every lineament of her person, and betrayed by every tone of her voice. And yet, *what* had she written? Well; internal consciousness of superiority of intellect is, perhaps, after all, the greatest distinction, and this, Angelina de Lacy enjoyed to her heart's content.

"Ask that sweet girl to come and sit beside me," said she, directing one of her devoted admirers to the part of the room where Rosa had placed herself. "I want to see you near," said she, with a kind of patronizing air, as Rosa, a little piqued at being sent for in so unceremonious a manner, drew near the throne of majesty, not certainly with the best imaginable grace.

"The very face," exclaimed the authoress, "I have been so long dying to find! You must—you shall sit for the frontispiece of Flushing's new series of female beauties. No blushing—no hesi-

tating—I am not accustomed to be refused. The fact is, I have engaged to write for him, but, you know, the thing is impossible without an inspiring theme. And really, the faces Flushington has shown me are clever enough, certainly, considering they were designed without a sitter, and all well managed as to contour, and that sort of thing, but they sadly want expression, as I tell him perpetually. Expression, you know, is what the poet must have. Without expression, the human face is a mere blank. By-the-bye, do you know how Flushington designs those beautiful heads of his?”

“Not the least in the world.”

“How should you suppose?”

“Either by obtaining the best sitters, or marking down in his memory the faces that please him best.”

“Nothing of the kind, I assure you. How invaluable are the advantages of moving in the world of literature and art! One sees and knows every thing. Trust me, you are quite mistaken. Flushington has no sitter—nothing but his own splendid genius to depend upon. I often sit with him in his studio, and when he begins a female head, he knows no more than his pencil whether it will turn out a Thalia or a Melpomene. With two curved lines for the neck, and an oval for the face, sometimes turned this way, and sometimes that, he fills up the blank with the usual complement of features, and in an instant you behold one of those incom-

parable beauties which, by their astonishing variety of grace and loveliness, adorn every drawing-room in England, and purchase for their ingenious designer his unbounded celebrity. After all, however, Flushington is not infallible. His last number was severely criticised by more than one of the reviews, and this year we are determined to redeem our character. Your face is exactly the kind of thing we want, and possesses the great advantage of being hitherto unknown. Flushington tells me that mine has the same characteristics of expression, but I am already too much before the public; besides which, you know, there is no writing about one's own face." And the wondering glance that Rosa directed to the authoress was answered by one of conscious beauty, from what source derived, it would have been difficult to say; for nature, more just in her dealings with the sons and daughters of men than we are always disposed to allow, had, while endowing the mind of Angelina de Lacy, left her countenance untouched by any mark of favour.

When the proposition of sitting for her likeness was renewed, Rosa declined the honour so promptly and decidedly, that the authoress, not accustomed to find her compliments so ungraciously received, permitted the young ignorant girl, so grossly blind to her own interests, to vacate the post of honour by the sofa, and by returning again to her former obscurity, to leave room for flatterers more obsequi-

ous, whose merits might be patronized to greater advantage.

It was as Rosa had anticipated. Frederick Fynch was of the party, and no sooner had she resumed her seat, than the young soldier was by her side, adorned with all his wonted blandishments, and ready to devote himself for the rest of the evening to music, to her, to the fair sex in general, in short, to anything but philosophy. At this party, Major Bond was also present, and Rosa observed, with some curiosity, that he claimed acquaintance with the Graftons on the score of his casual introduction, when they had first met.

"Well done, Bond," said the lieutenant, "you are a happy man;" for just then the major had seated himself between the mother and her eldest daughter,—“if I had done that now, I should have been frowned upon, and frozen into an ice-berg.”

"Now," said Rosa, "you see the advantage of literary conversation. Philosophy would be a passport for you, even to the favour of the Graftons."

"Philosophy!" exclaimed Frederick, with a look and tone that told at once the character of his friend, "the major has just philosophy enough to know that his own head is not a mushroom,—a fact, by-the-bye, which I have myself been sometimes rather inclined to doubt."

"What, then, can recommend him?"

"He wants a wife."

"Hush, hush! you shall not speak treason

against my friends. The Graftons, I am sure, whatever may be said of their pretensions, cannot be accused of wanting to establish themselves differently in the world. They are too well satisfied as they are."

Rosa was answered by a loud laugh. "Come, come," said Frederick Fynch, "I would rather hear you sing than talk nonsense," and leading her to the piano, he chose a duet in which he knew himself to excel, and in condescension to the solicitations of the company, they raised their melodious voices together.

It was indeed as Frederick Fynch had said of his friend—he wanted a wife! he wanted a rich wife, too; and having ascertained that Mrs. Grafton was left with unlimited power over the ample property bequeathed by her deceased lord, he set about, in a very serious, business-like way, to cultivate the good will of the mother, hoping, that if the daughters proved at all amiable sort of girls, she might be easily induced to settle them for life on liberal terms.

Other adventurers in the same line had doubtless been aware of the same probable advantages; but the philosophy of the Graftons had hitherto kept all, who might otherwise have been their admirers, aloof. To the merry little major this appeared no obstacle. His very ignorance of the monster, so much dreaded by his sex, rendered him insensible to its terrors, and being the first upon the field of action, he pre-

sented himself as a candidate for the favour of the ladies of Laurel Cottage, with perfect self-complacency and with no small reason for maintaining that complacency undisturbed.

"What can they be talking about?" said Frederick to Rosa, after she had cast a furtive glance around the room, and seen that the major still maintained his ground.

"What can they be talking about?" said Rosa. "If you will allow me five guesses, I will engage that one out of the number shall be right."

"In my extreme benevolence I will allow you seven, and if you lose, your punishment shall be, that I will call at the cottage to-morrow morning."

"Defend me from such a failure! But still I will try. Gravitation—electric fluid—secondary motives."

"No, no; that is too indefinite."

"I assure you, it is a very decided point, upon which we reason for hours."

"Well, go on; but keep to more intelligible things, or I shall never be able to prove you wrong."

"Fluxes and refluxes——"

"That goes for two."

"By no means. I have only counted four. Now for the remaining three. Waves of light—primary formations—and lastly, the march of mind."

"I should like to hear the Major attacked on

any one of these points," replied Frederick; "but—" and he spoke with a very sincere conviction of his own inability to judge,—“how shall I know whether they are talking on any of these subjects or not? If you had given me billiards, battles, blunderbusses, or a few positive ideas of any kind to lay hold of, I should have won for a certainty; but now I may win, and be unconscious of my victory.”

“Stay,” said Rose, until I have played this sweet Italian air for Miss Higgins, and I will help you.”

The scheme devised by these two sapient logicians was quickly put in practice; and so intent were the party upon their own objects of interest, that neither Mrs. Grafton nor her daughters observed the movement of Rosa and Frederick to their part of the room. As for the Major, he had no time to observe any thing. Never since the hour when he was seized for a spy by some French soldiers, without being able to defend himself by any approximation to their mother-tongue, had he been in such a predicament. Obligated to talk, and extremely anxious to make himself agreeable, he was addressed on subjects the most foreign to his understanding, and sphere of observation; and at the same time listened to with the utmost deference to his own enlightened views, and sage remarks. He was almost on the rack: the heat of the room was intolerable to him; but still the ladies looked so condescendingly solicitous to engage his attention

and detain him near them, that he wished from very bottom of his heart they would talk somewhat more like common sense, or something, at events, in which he could take a creditable part. Had he known what treacherous ears were listening, his difficulty would have been still greater than it was.

“And now,” said Mrs. Grafton, assuming most important look and manner, “I appeal to you as a gentleman who has seen much of the world—

“Few people have seen more, I assure you,” interrupted the Major.

——“I appeal to you as a gentleman who has seen much of human nature under its various aspects, both of civilization and of barbarism; I appeal to you as one who is capable of judgment and well furnished with data upon which to form opinion on this momentous point,”—(the fire of the enemy in ambush could scarcely have made the Major look more alarmed than he did about the point.)—“I appeal to you for your candid opinion as to the progress of mind in general.”

“There,” said Rosa, “you have lost by the experiment.” And she spoke with so much energy that the Major looked round, and saw an enemy indeed in ambush; and while his countenance evinced the most fervent desire to join the enemy, Mrs. Grafton appealed to him again, going over the same ground with great patience and precision.

“W—e—ll,” said the Major, drawing out the word, as if to retard its escape, and thus delay his doom,—“I am really inclined to think—so far as I have had any opportunity of judging—.”

The ladies were all attention. He had begun his speech, and retreat was impossible; but, alas! he had begun without one definite idea to proceed upon, and he could only repeat, “I am quite disposed to think,—my opinion is decidedly in favour—that is, all things taken into account—” and there is no telling to what extreme of absurdity his painful position might have reduced him, had not a burst of laughter from Frederick Fynch, who had placed himself almost immediately behind the speaker, broken the elaborate chain of his reflections.

“Sir!” said Mrs. Grafton, looking indignantly round, “you have interrupted a discussion on the most interesting subject of philosophical inquiry.”

“Sir!” exclaimed the Major, in the same tone, but lowering his voice as he proceeded,—“you have saved me from inevitable ruin.”

Whatever might be the effect of this interruption upon the different characters affected by it, no farther notice was taken of the important and interesting philosophical inquiry; and the Major, like a prisoner released on his parole, took the welcome opportunity of mixing with other company, just returning to Mrs. Grafton and her daughter so often as to convince them that they were the first objects of his attention, without incurring the risk of being re-

captured; while, convinced that philosophy was an element in which he positively could not live, he resolutely determined never to trust himself in similar circumstances again.

Frederick Fynch would probably have retreated from the same field had he been so imprudent as to have exposed himself to the same attack; but profiting by the experience of his friend, he assumed, from this time, a sort of middle course, sufficiently deferential towards the blue stocking, to conciliate the favour of the ladies, without endangering his own safety, and thus he improved his acquaintance to his own advantage; for Rosa was daily becoming more lovely in his sight, than he had thought it possible a mere farmer's daughter could be; and she, too, on her part, though convinced that he was a very shallow-minded youth, with few real advantages to recommend him, began to think the hours extremely short and pleasant that were laughed away with him.

In this manner time flew on, and whenever Rosa thought of her own destination, a pang shot through her heart, and she drove the hated remembrance from her. Not that she was at all more reconciled to the idea of remaining at home, but she had now been living many months, and daily associating with those who, whatever their pretension to intellectual superiority might be, valued above all other things, their own exemption from vulgar association, and the very words, *necessity of earn-*

ing a living, would, to them, have set the stamp of irrevocable degradation upon whatever luckless individual it might have been applied to.

She had, moreover, been spending weeks and months of idleness, mingling with the amusements of every hour, that fatal mixture of pride, envy, contempt, and all uncharitableness, which, under the names of pointed satire, quickness of intellect, discrimination, and many other things that young ladies like to feel themselves possessed of, gives a pernicious zest to conversation, poisons the very springs of Christian love, and converts the privilege of social communication into the means of spiritual death.

Reader, let us pause one moment, and ask in what single point the individual, whose progress towards maturity we have thus far traced, was qualifying herself to conduct the minds of immortal beings, who should stand before her at the last day, either welcoming her to a participation in the celestial enjoyments for which she had faithfully endeavoured to prepare them, or denouncing judgment upon their impotent instructress, their blind leader, their false guide.

Christian parents ! it is for you to decide upon the awfully important question, whether education shall consist entirely of a cultivation of the powers, and enlargement of the means of enjoyment, in which the faculties of the mind have no part—whether it shall mean a mere attuning of the ear, and prac-

tising of the hand, with a facility in the *ut-
tance* of all knowledge, or whether education sha
be a word understood, by its use and appl
cation, to signify the awakening, strengthenin
and directing in their right exercise, those inte
lectual and moral faculties by which man is enable
to judge between good and evil, and by which th
mind, even in its juvenile simplicity, may be en
couraged to seek, and prepared to receive, truth
of eternal import to its own happiness, and to the
of the whole brotherhood of man.

CHAPTER VII.

It was not with any deep regret that Rosa Bell became conscious of her stay at Laurel Cottage having extended to the limits prescribed by fitness and propriety. In her intercourse with the Graftons there never had been mingled one spark of affection : and vain, thoughtless, and fond of excitement as she was, her heart was never satisfied without partaking of more sustaining aliment than the mere gratification of girlish vanity could afford. Perhaps the very absence of attachment to her female friends was one reason why she felt the more disposed to encourage the attentions, and cultivate the acquaintance of Frederick Fynch. He, at least, *professed* to be happy in her society, and in their last interview, previous to her departure, all had been said on his part which could be expected to precede a declaration of love, and an offer of his hand.

We will not expatiate upon the interesting nature

of a separation under such circumstances, nor betray to the world how often the thoughts of the young traveller returned to the scene she had left, the gallant soldier, and his still more captivating regimentals. The thoughts of a young lady in a stage coach ought certainly to be sacred to herself. Suffice it, therefore, to say, that in the afternoon of a dull, drizzling day in November, Rosa Bell was hurried by the rattling vehicle, to which she had committed herself and her reflections, over the pavement of the market-town, frequented by her father; and here, at the door of the principal inn, she was received into the arms of the good man himself, well pleased to see the treasure of his heart and home once more blooming before him, in all the renovated charms of health and youth.

Notwithstanding the interesting nature of Rosa's reflections, as she travelled on the king's highway, she had questioned more than once, whether it was likely George Gordon would be in waiting to convey her home; and, rejecting every imaginable contingency that might prevent his doing so, she had settled it in her own mind, that the glance of his eye would be the first well-known object to attract her own. What, then, was her astonishment to look in vain for the welcome these eyes were so capable of expressing, and to behold, instead, the full breadth of her mother's comely figure, as she stood erect upon a pair of pattens,

with a basket in her hand, containing all the linen-drapery her family would be likely to want through the coming winter.

Mrs. Bell, like her daughter, was extremely susceptible of impressions from surrounding things; and, unfortunately for their sympathy with each other, while Rosa had been undergoing the process of superficial refinement, she had been as rapidly retrograding into the region of butter, eggs, and cheese; where, except when sister Dinah, Mrs. Fynch, or her own capricious child, interrupted her occupations by depreciating their merits, she always found herself most happy, and most at home. Indeed, Martha Bell was a very reclaimable sort of person. Happy would it have been for Rosa, had her wanderings not been more difficult to retrace.

Arrived at the little inn where Peter Bell was in the habit of resorting on market-days, Rosa trod, with ineffable contempt, the sanded floor of the uncarpeted room, in which it was customary for farmers and their families to wait until their horses, taxed carts, pillions, and side-saddles were made ready; and here it was, that a voice, whose deep, yet gentle tones might have redeemed it from vulgarity, once more saluted her ear with a welcome as genuine as a warm heart, and a long absence ever combined to produce. But the tones of that voice were unheeded, the warmth of that welcome was unfelt, where it ought to have been most grate-

ful, and Rosa asked, with petulance and dissatisfaction, how she was to be conveyed home.

"On your own pony," said George Gordon, without doubting that the information would be agreeable; "I led it for you this morning."

"It is impossible I should ride," said Rosa, "I am not prepared."

"I brought your habit, strapped upon the saddle," was the patient reply.

"And my father and mother?"

"Oh, we ride on old Gaffer, as usual," said the farmer, "and my wife begins to think a pillion easier than she did six months ago. Rosa, my girl, take this lesson from your mother. There's nothing like conforming to the times. Things are not as they used to be at Waterton."

As he said this, in bustled the very person thus pointed out for Rosa's imitation, buttoned up to her chin and down to her feet, in one of those indescribable garments, formerly called a great coat, but now almost entirely fallen into disuse, with the pillions they used to grace. In this garment she thought it no disparagement to her character, to mount behind her husband, with a well-filled basket in her hand, at the very moment she was pointed out as an example worthy of her daughter's imitation, and immediately after that daughter had returned from Frederick Fynch, and Laurel Cottage.

There was nothing left for Rosa but to follow her mother's laudable example, and after exchanging her handsome travelling dress for her habit, not fashionable, it is true, but still incomparably superior to her mother's great coat, she mounted the pretty white pony it had once been her happiness to ride. The next moment George Gordon was by her side, and faithfully as ever plumed knight led the light palfrey of his ladye-love, did he guide her through the difficulties of a long ride on a starless winter's night.

What might have been the effect of his manly and well regulated voice, his facility for carrying on rational and interesting conversation, aided by the many little attentions he found ample opportunity of paying, we will not pretend to say, had not his companion previously discovered by the light of a blazing fire, in the parlour with the sanded floor, that he actually wore leather gaiters, and that his dark luxuriant hair, instead of being fashionably cropped, like that of Frederick Fynch, was left free to flow and float just as nature, or the winds might guide it.

Even, now, as they rode together, conversing on subjects connected with the past, the present, and the future, Rosa's watchful eye sometimes caught the outline of a figure, which, wrapped, as it was, in a coat that seemed to defy the elements, looked, to her perverted fancy, of such uncouth and herculean dimensions, that she sighed over the remem-

brance of the slender young soldier, and almost wished she could ride all night, rather than alight at her father's humble door.

Here, however, a welcome so warm and cordial awaited her, that she must indeed have lost much of her feeling, had its genial influence failed to reach her heart. Not that she could look around with any thing like satisfaction upon the interior of her father's home, or partake of her mother's tea, without comparing the equipment of her plentiful, but rustic board, with that of Mrs. Grafton's; more especially, as the time of her absence had been marked by her parents with an increase of frugality, and a deeper sense of the necessity of self-denial, which gave a character of additional homeliness to every thing around her. But still there is a pleasure in a welcome, and a warm fire-side, after a long ride on a winter's night, to which few minds are insensible; and Rosa, consoled by personal comforts in the absence of personal elegancies, compelled herself to ask, with good humour, and apparent interest, after many home affairs, which had not, in reality, occupied her thoughts since she last beheld her parents.

The pleasure that lighted up the fine countenance of George Gordon, as he answered and encouraged these inquiries, struck her as altogether unaccountable, and perhaps somewhat absurd; but it made him look so handsome, that she went on, for Rosa had already learned the art of practising for effect,

and, young as she was, her short acquaintance with the world had taught her many of its artificial rules, more honoured in the breach than the observance.

It was on retiring to her own room, weary and dispirited, that she gave way to her natural and now unrestrained feelings. Here all had been done which her mother's care and kindness could suggest to increase her comforts, and even to embellish her solitary retreat; but she was not happy, and therefore she was not grateful. The room was low, and the narrow carpets did not cover half the floor; but worse than all, the looking-glass was small, and had, what she had often amused herself with in her childhood, a slight tendency to distort her features. How could she be happy? How could she be grateful? And this was the apartment, the habitation, and the life, which the Gordons thought she ought to be satisfied with. What a perversion of human reason was implied in this unaccountable idea! "The Gordons could know nothing of human nature. They were very eccentric people, living quite out of the world, and like nobody else."

With these reflections Rosa fell asleep, and when she awoke in the morning, it was to hear the low warbling of the robin at her window, announcing the sad season of the fall, by that sweetest yet most mournful melody of nature; and she looked out upon the sere and yellow leaves, as they hung sus-

pended from the boughs, in the stillness of a misty morning, as if by a frail thread, which the fanning of the robin's wing would break asunder, separating them for ever from the place of their verdant beauty.

There was nothing in the aspect of nature to awaken hope, and Rosa would probably have sunk into a fit of musing and despondency, to which she was but little accustomed, had not a gentle tap at the door of her chamber disturbed her reverie.

"May I come in?" said Alice Gordon, with an expression of ardent expectation, and the next moment her arms were clasped around her friend, and her eyes were fixed upon her face with that earnest, searching look, which asks a thousand questions in one glance,—questions of what has been the weal or woe of the absent one,—how the hours of long separation have been filled up,—what recollections have remained indelible, and what feelings of tenderness or affection are brought back.

Rosa felt the look, but she could not answer its deep meaning, and turning to more trivial things, she expressed her astonishment that Alice should have crossed the damp fields at so early an hour.

"You need make no wonder of that," replied her friend. "Only think how healthy I have always been, and how early we always rise. I would have come to you last night, but I thought your good parents would like best to have you all

to themselves; and, for this reason, we pressed George to spend the evening with us, as he had done ever since you left us, but he did not seem to think he should be much in the way, at least, he found some excuse for staying, though I do not think we any of us knew exactly what it was. And now, Rosa, let me congratulate you upon your good looks. You are really quite blooming again. Shall we prove your strength after breakfast, by a long walk? I want to talk to you about every thing that has happened since you left us, and to hear all about the gay people you have been living with so long."

Rosa agreed to the proposal, and the two friends went down together, for Martha Bell had begun to announce to her household, in no very gentle terms, that breakfast was ready.

If the picture of her parents, as they rode home from market, and the athletic form of George Gordon, buttoned up in his rough great coat, had been distressing to the sensibilities of the young governess, the same individuals seated at the breakfast table, by broad daylight, in their working day costume, prepared from head to foot for a strong conflict with the elements, both within and without the house, was but little calculated to soothe her offended feelings, or counteract her strong and strengthening prejudices against rural life. It was with a sensation, bordering upon disgust, that she took her place at the breakfast table, between her

mother and George Gordon, who paid so little respect to her feelings, as to join with Peter Bell in an animated discussion upon the merits and demerits of a certain kind of sheep.

Released, at last, from the almost intolerable confinement of her father's common sitting room, Rosa now accompanied her friend along the paths to which they had both become familiarized in early youth; and if the conversation was not exactly such as the Graftons would have carried on, it had sufficient interest to beguile the morning hours of their accustomed length.

Before returning home, Rosa took the opportunity of calling at the parsonage house, where Mrs. Gordon and her daughter Jane were, as usual, busy without bustle, and active without unsettlement.

The duty properly devolving upon Alice this morning, had been that of teaching her younger sisters; but Jane, though a stricter disciplinarian, was so well acquainted with the claims of friendship, that she had voluntarily offered to take her sister's place, and all seemed well pleased that Alice had enjoyed a long morning with her friend. Indeed, such was the order of Mrs. Gordon's household, that no duty was ever allowed to give place, except to one of higher importance, and this importance was computed by its moral nature or tendency. Thus, the same measure of disgrace was never attached to a falsehood, or a fracture in a china

cup, nor the same commendation bestowed upon an effort of manual labour, and upon an act of self-denial.

“Every thing is too perfect, too rational,” said Rosa to herself, whenever she turned away from Mrs. Gordon’s door; and as it is probable the reader may be of the same opinion, we pass on to observe the workings of a different system.

Christmas, this winter, was a dreary time to Peter Bell and his family. Corn yielded badly, bills poured in, and Rosa, with her illness, her travelling, and her fashionable dresses, had spent money enough to maintain Alice Gordon for thrice the length of time. It was clear she must go out and make something for her own maintenance. She herself was anxious to do so, and therefore sister Dinah was written to, and a situation was in due time found. Nobody knew or perhaps could know much about the situation. The pay was reasonable, the family *genteel*, and Rosa made another demand upon her father’s purse for a full equipment of genteel winter clothing.

With extreme regret Alice Gordon saw these preparations going on, for she had hoped until now, that her friend might be won over to different views of comfort and economy. Now, however, the case was decided, and she had already seen enough of the effect of Rosa’s absence from home, to fear that she would henceforth return less and less like the friend she had loved and valued

as the sister of her youth. Already much of the natural warmth of her feelings seemed to be smoothed away in mere polish, already Rosa could meet her with averted eye, already she could sacrifice the peace of those who loved her best, for the momentary gratification of a passing jest. What then was to be expected from an absence prolonged for years, and from associations entirely different from those of her early youth? She could not bear to part from her without some allusion to these her secret forebodings,—some attempt to avert the anticipated evil.

Alice was not sanguine as to the effect any exertion of her own might produce upon the mind of her friend, but she had been taught that Christian duty is not the less imperative, because it does not always work out the end we desire; and therefore she determined not to lose, what might perhaps be the last opportunity of appealing to the better feelings of her friend.

The time of Rosa's departure from home being fixed for the expiration of the Christmas holidays, she spent that season, whose cheerfulness or gloom seems so peculiarly to indicate what degree of internal satisfaction pervades the domestic circle, in a round of visiting amongst her friends and neighbours; for though she would gladly have entertained them at her father's house, her parents seemed both to want spirits for such a conflict with their scanty means, and therefore she was the more

willing to leave them to their melancholy thoughts, and divert herself with such parties, such music, and such dancing, as the neighbourhood of Waterton afforded.

On these occasions the absence of Mrs. Fynch was a loss severely felt, for though languid and spiritless in her own person, no one knew better than she did how to get up a party, or give the tone to country manners, and it was one half of Rosa's entertainment to see all the farmer's wives and daughters imitating the manufacturer's lady, according to their different degrees of wealth, and personal capability. She forgot to look at home, and see, into what absurdities the same false estimate of excellence had too often betrayed her own good-hearted mother; to say nothing of another individual, upon whose faults and follies she seldom turned the same discriminating eye which employed itself so diligently in watching those around her; nor was she quite sure that the regret she so often expressed on account of Mrs. Fynch's protracted stay in Devonshire, did not owe some of its intensity to a secret desire of keeping up the interest she persuaded herself she was feeling in Mrs. Fynch's amiable son.

Be this as it may, Rosa certainly did think the parties at Glossom Villa had been more agreeable than she now found them at any other place; and when preparing herself for her farewell visit at the parsonage-house, she wished from her heart that the

Gordons were more fond of music, and dancing, and less addicted to serious conversation. In fact, she was beginning to fear them,—one and all. There was a painful uneasiness when their eyes were upon her, and a sensible relief whenever they began to talk to her on light and trivial subjects, because she was perpetually expecting their reproof, and wishing to escape from their advice. Not that they ever spoke to her in the spirit of dictation. She would probably have been better satisfied if they had, because there would then have been something to resent; but mingled with all their kindness, there was a quiet uncompromising rationality about them, more felt by Rosa, than intended by them; and sometimes in the petulance of the moment she was ready to suspect that she disliked them all. Jane Gordon, the oldest of the family, she was quite sure she should dislike, if she ever took the liberty of interfering with her affairs, she was so everlastingly busy about useful things, and so efficient in correcting errors, that if she had had the least pretension about her, she would have been absolutely intolerable. Mrs. Gordon too—she wondered how her children doated upon her, as they did,—how they could feel so much at ease in her presence as they did, and kiss her, and play with her as if she was but an elder sister, yet prefer suffering any privation, rather than incur their mother's displeasure. And George was growing so

grave and dull, and so industrious too, that if he did not, amongst his attention to cows and calves, and drills and husbandry, remember every little commission she gave him, the books she loved to read, and all the little services she felt quite sure she could not live without, George Gordon would really be little better than a mere earth worm, more fit to burrow in her father's fields, than live in polished and genteel society. There was Alice too,—but nobody could dislike Alice Gordon. The thing was impossible. Yet, even Alice grew a little tame. She had no love for music, and was so unceasingly good, there was no entertainment in her.

In this potent manner Rosa reflected upon her best friends; but in summing up her evidence against George Gordon, and in gratefully acknowledging his many kind attentions to herself, she felt one circumstance connected with his behaviour, perhaps too keenly to make it the subject even of her most secret confessions. George Gordon was kind to her, generously, unremittingly kind; but he no longer seemed to find such perfect enjoyment in her society as he had done on her first return home. It was then almost impossible to draw him away from Peter Bell's fire-side. Now he often spent his evenings at home; and what was still more remarkable, when Rosa visited at the parsonage, he had once or twice chosen to remain with her parents. All this was inexplicable to Rosa,

and what made it infinitely more mortifying, it was accompanied with nothing that afforded a plea for demanding an explanation.

That George Gordon should voluntarily give up the pleasure of her society for his books, or, in short, for any other ordinary consideration, was a fact so startling to her vanity, that it began to assume an aspect of very serious importance in her sight; and while she practised all those little arts in which it is said that women are peculiarly skilled, to find out the nature and extent of her influence over him, the evidence of each succeeding day confirmed the conviction that his kindness originated in mere brotherly feeling, and that he looked upon her character with the same unflinching regard to moral worth, which so often made her shrink from the rest of his family.

“ Yet surely he will go with me to-day,” said she, while preparing to pay her last visit to the Gordons, previous to her departure from home. But as she looked from her window to see whether the weather would admit of her adorning herself in the dress she deemed most becoming, her eye caught the figure of George Gordon passing on horseback through a gate which led out upon the public road; and, for once, more hurt than piqued, she dashed away the tear from her eye, and cast aside the becoming dress she had intended him to see her in for the last time.

There is a bitterness in the feeling with which we

regard the voluntary desertion of a once true friend, that has scarcely its equal in all the unpalatable draughts of which we have to drink before the cup of life is fully drained. What are the ninety and nine warm hearts still left to beat for us and ours, if, with all we possess and enjoy, and yearn to impart, we cannot win back the hundredth. It is not that the value of that particular gem was worth the whole of our wreath, but its irreparable loss has broken the circle, and the glory of the diadem is gone.

Rosa was met by a welcome more than commonly affectionate on the evening of her last visit to the Gordons. The fact was, all felt it to be her last visit, at least for many months,—it might be for years; and with that feeling, there arose a tenderness for her faults, and an anxious solicitude for her future welfare, which made her dearer to her friends than she had ever been before since the days of her childish simplicity, when she was the joy of every heart, and the delight of every eye. Nor had her beauty waned with the lapse of time; it had rather attained a dazzling perfection, well calculated to awaken the serious apprehensions of those who knew the danger of this natural endowment to a young and inexperienced woman. But along with the increase of her personal charms, there was an evident desire to produce effect, such as Rosa in her girlish days had seemed as if she would be the last person in the world to acquire.

Never was this desire less gratified than when she took her place amongst the Gordons ; for by no assumption of knowledge, of refinement, or even of humility, was it possible to find favour in their sight. Nor, to do Rosa justice, was she one of those artificial characters who must always assume. Naturally affectionate and sincere, she could on all occasions, when her better feelings were called into exercise, lay aside the *practice* by which, in her short intercourse with the world, she had learned so skilfully to please ; and on this her last evening, her mind was almost wholly occupied with grave thoughts about her future lot, rendered somewhat appalling by the time of her departure drawing so near,—by tenderness for her parents, whom in spite of their vulgarity she really loved,—and by a general sadness naturally diffusing itself over her reflections, as they were connected with her future prospects.

The family at the parsonage thought they had never seen Rosa more agreeable than on this evening, and when she rose at last to walk home, after listening in vain for the well known step of him who had so often been her conductor across the fields, there were tears of affectionate regret in many of those keen searching eyes, from which Rosa had so often wished to shroud herself and her faults.

It was a clear calm evening, with a full moon shining alone in the wide blue heavens, and making

the hoar frost on the grassy plains look like molten silver; while such stillness was in the air, upon the earth, and pervading all things, that the low breathing of the cattle might be heard as they lay couched in their mossy lair, or rose startled from their sleep by the crush of the crisp herbage beneath the traveller's foot.

Rosa would have felt no fears in going alone on such a night along the hedge-row path which led to her father's dwelling, but Alice, playfully alluding to her brother's want of gallantry, willingly supplied his place; and the two friends walked slowly and silently together, recalling as they passed along by bush and stile, and bosky dell, the all-important but indescribable events of childhood, with all the joys and sorrows they had shared together.

We have said little of the character of Alice Gordon. It was not one to figure in a book. No poet would have chosen her for his theme,—no painter for his study; yet, to those who knew and loved her, she was almost inspiring, and infinitely more than beautiful. Much as Rosa sometimes felt disposed to think disparagingly of the mental capabilities of her friend, there was a moral power in Alice Gordon's well-disciplined mind, before which she bowed with conscious inferiority, and never was this felt more forcibly, than when Alice believed herself called upon to throw aside the yielding gentleness of her nature, and to act from the strong dictates of imperative duty. The very effort it cost her to do

this, gave strength to her words, and efficiency to her endeavours, while her eye, her forehead, and her whole countenance assumed a majesty, which, when contrasted with her meek familiar smile, was almost irresistible in its influence upon those who shared the counsels of her bosom.

“Rosa,” said Alice, after a long silence, “we are about to part, perhaps for ever. I do not mean personally, for I have none of those romantic forebodings which are sometimes looked upon as omens of an imaginary doom. That you will return to us there is every reason to hope, but that you will return unchanged to your friends,—to me, is more than I dare expect.”

“And why should I not?” said Rosa. “Have I not already been absent many months, and am I not the same thoughtless, worthless, incorrigible creature I always was?”

“Well,” resumed Alice, “that is a point I will not argue with you. I have other things to converse about to-night.”

“But why do you speak so gravely?” said Rosa, “that stern cold manner is so unlike your own.”

“Ah! Rosa,” said Alice, “you call me stern and cold, when my heart is aching with tenderness for you. What I would say to you to-night,—for I must say it, whatever you may think of me, arises out of the strong conviction I feel, that for all our privileges, as well as for all our possessions, —

that even for this girlish friendship, to me the source of the greatest enjoyment I have ever known, we shall have to render an account at the last day ; and what will that account be, when we are compelled to confess that we have trifled away the hours of early life together, without once attempting to assist each other in our way to heaven."

"Can you forgive me, if, as a friend, I assume the right of enquiring, why you have chosen the occupation of a governess?"

"Because I cannot live at home, and I know of nothing else that I can do."

"I must add to my question another,—*why* can you not live at home?"

"My parents cannot afford to maintain me."

"Not if you assisted them, and spared them the expense of a servant?"

"And are you, Alice Gordon," said Rosa, more angrily than she had ever spoken to her friend before, "ringing this old story in my ears? I thought I had escaped to-day ; but it seems you were sent out with me, that this everlasting alarum might be mingled with your farewell."

Alice was silent for some minutes. At last she said, "Well Rosa, since you are not in a temper to hear me, we must part as we have ever done before,—with affection it is true, such as I fervently hope no after circumstances in life, no interference of mine, or petulance of yours, will be able to destroy ; but not with the strong conviction upon our souls,

without which friendship is but a name, that we have done our utmost to direct, and support each other in all that is most important to our temporal and eternal happiness.

“ No, Alice,” said Rosa, after another interval of silence, “ you shall not part from me without unburdening your mind. Much as I dislike the subject you have chosen,—weary as I am of hearing the same sermon preached by every member of your family, I will compel myself to endure it once more. Say on.”

With this ungracious permission, Alice Gordon proceeded “ I am afraid, Rosa, you and I do not ask ourselves so often as we ought, whether we are living for this world or the next. If for this world only, we act consistently by making the gratification of the present moment our sole object of desire ;—if for the next, we should act more wisely, were we to cultivate such dispositions of heart and mind as would fit us for participation in eternal happiness. You have acquired all the ornaments and embellishments of life ; and I grant that such attainments as yours may contribute to the sum of human happiness ; but are you quite sure that the happiness of heaven will depend upon the skilful exercise of such faculties as you seem determined to spend your life in cultivating here ? Now you *are* quite sure, that habits of self-denial, humility, gratitude, and deference towards others, charity of *thought* and action, with a zeal for the perform-

ance of every social and domestic duty, founded upon the religious principles inculcated in the bible, the only basis of all sound morality, will, in their effect upon your character, tend eventually to prepare it for a state of existence into which no evil is admitted."

"But what has my living at home to do with this kind of preparation?" said Rosa, rather impatiently.

"By living idly and discontentedly at home," resumed Alice, "I grant you would make little progress; but by bending your mind to be, under the Divine blessing, a comfort to your parents, and a stay to their declining years, you would enjoy an opportunity of practising every christian virtue, in a situation where your efforts are unquestionably due, and where they would also be most valued."

"I dare say," replied Rosa, attempting to smile away the gravity of her friend's discourse, "I shall find ample opportunity for self-denial, for humility, and for all your christian graces, where I am going."

"Yes, Rosa, we have such opportunities wherever we go; but what I grieve for is, that you should choose a situation in which no fond heart will be comforted, no naturally dependent spirit supported by your endeavours. Oh! my friend, if I might judge of you as I would of myself, I should say, it needs all the reward that can be reaped from the affectionate intercourse of social life, to keep us in the path of duty. Compare the difficulty of self-denial practised towards the parents who have nursed

and cherished us, with what it must be when practised towards a stranger. Compare humility towards those whom nature bids us venerate, with humility before those who regard us merely as their hired servants. I might go on through every duty enjoined by our holy religion, and I should conclude with blessing God, that he has so ordained it for the help and the consolation of his frail creatures, that by their union in families and communities, they may strengthen each other in every laudable purpose, watch over each other for good, and meet every trial, and combat every difficulty, with the balm of social concord, and the blessing of domestic love, perpetually sweetening the springs of life. Think of these things, Rosa, when you are far away, when strangers are around you, and it seems hard to resign what you receive no thanks for, and bitter to endure what claims no compassion ;—think of these things ; and if there be an easier, a more congenial way of serving God and man, yet still as lawful, surely you will be justified in returning to it.”

Alice said no more, for as the last words passed her lips, she saw in the moonlight the figure of her brother advancing towards them ; and folding her arms around her friend for the last time, where they had so often parted before, she left her at the gate which opened into Rosa Bell’s garden, and hastened back to her own home.

Rosa leaned silently upon the arm of George Gordon, as he led her towards her father’s door.

She had been surprised, annoyed, and finally grieved, by the tone of her friend's conversation. She did not like to be preached to, for it brought a sort of half-conviction of needing it, that was anything but pleasant; and lost in the painful reflections her friend's conversation had awakened, she did not perceive for some time that she had passed her father's door, and was making a circle round the orchard.

"Why are we walking here, George?" she asked with some surprise.

"I suppose because it is the last time," said her companion. "I know of no other reason."

"The last time again!" exclaimed Rose. "Alice has been singing the same dismal ditty. One would think I was going away for ever. It is not possible that twelve months should make any material difference in one's habits and feelings."

"Indeed! I thought six were sometimes sufficient for that."

"With you, I grant they may; but do not imagine me so changeable and capricious as yourself."

George Gordon turned upon Rosa a look, beneath which she always quailed. She could see in the moonlight it was that look, for she knew it well, and suddenly casting off all that was affected or artificial in her manner, she exclaimed, with the genuine warmth of her heart,

"No, George, you are not capricious—you never

were. Go where I will—love whom I may, I shall never meet with friends so unchangeably generous and true, as you and Alice. And yet, George, would you believe it! this very night—this night that you call my last, I have turned upon my sister all the bitterness of ingratitude, and sent her away with a sorrowful soul. If I add to the measure of my wickedness, ingratitude to you, I shall indeed have sinned beyond forgiveness.”

George Gordon made no reply, except by the silent pressure of the fair hand, that seemed as if it would not relinquish its hold of his, until some assurance of forgiveness had been given; and without unburdening his mind of one of the many thoughts which crowded upon it, he led his companion to her father’s fireside, and took his accustomed place beside her, free from all appearance of feeling, or having felt, more emotion than the most ordinary circumstances might awaken.

CHAPTER IX.

IN the course of three days from Rosa Bell's ungracious parting with her friend Alice, she was received, with due formality, as the future governess in a wealthy and respectable family of the name of Vincent, whose stately mansion, situated on the side of a hill clothed with wood, commanded an extensive view over one of the most fertile portions of our island.

It needed all the self-complacency, to which Rosa was not a stranger, to support her through the ceremony of an introduction to scenes so entirely new to her eye, and circumstances so different from her previous experience. Her ready faculty of adaptation here, however, as in all situations, came to her aid; and had Mr. and Mrs. Vincent been people of ordinary minds and motives, she would, in a very few days, have been fully installed in her new office.

Mrs. Vincent was *professedly* a woman of system, and her husband was consequently the common cypher attached to such an unit. At Belgrave

Lodge, the seat of this illustrious family,* phrenology, at the time of Rosa's initiation, was the order of the day; the study of which science, in conjunction with that of health, seemed, in the opinion of the Vincents, to constitute the whole duty of man.

Scarcely had Rosa been five minutes beneath their roof, when Mrs. Vincent led her to the window, to expatiate upon the advantages of their situation with regard to dryness and purity of air; and although Rosa had by this time regained all her natural bloom and animation, while her patroness harangued upon the merits of her system, with a cheek of parchment and an eye of leaden dullness, there was no way of arriving at any satisfactory conclusion, except by *appearing* to be convinced, and consenting to take the same pills as Mr. Vincent took every morning.

"I should like to see the gentleman first," thought Rosa; but she consented, nevertheless, quite aware that to *take* pills, does not always mean to swallow them.

"I, and my children," said the lady, "adhere implicitly to Dr. Moon's system. *We* never deviate in the slightest particular; but I like Vincent to try

* It is not intended that this, and the following remarks, should apply to phrenology as a science, but to that class of pretenders who, without any knowledge of the philosophy of mind, presume to pronounce upon characters, merely from the *inequalities* perceptible on the external surface of the skull.

these things, in order that we may know what is really advantageous, in case we should be removed from the reach of the doctor, as, you know, one must sometimes, in travelling from place to place.

"Happy Mr. Vincent," thought Rosa. "You and I seem likely to share the same fate. And your children," she added aloud, "I hope they derive benefit from Dr. Moon's system."

"The greatest imaginable. They are literally kept alive by it. Poor little dears! their natural delicacy of constitution is the greatest, I may say the only affliction, besides that of my own ill health, that I have to endure."

And here the mother's words were confirmed by the entrance of three little, pallid, spiritless, diseased-looking children, who fixed their large blue senseless eyes upon Rosa, and then, as if well satisfied that she held in her hand neither pill-box nor potion, turned languidly away, one to look out of the window, another to sit quietly on a stool by the fire, and the third to watch the opening of the door, in the hope of making its escape.

"Lucy, my love," said Mrs. Vincent, "do not stand so near the window, there is a very considerable draught when the wind is in the west. Poor Lucy, you must know, always has a cough—a small, tickling, irritating sort of cough."

"Cannot Dr. Moon cure it?" asked Rosa, very naturally.

"Dr. Moon *alleviates* it, Miss Bell. In order to

judge of his professional skill, we must not form our opinions by what the children are, but by what they would be without him. Sylvia, my love, did Benson give you the powder this morning, exactly at half-past eleven?"

"Yes, mamma," said the child, with a quivering lip, slightly curled outwards by incessant nausea; and similar questions having been put to the other children, Mrs. Vincent proceeded to what was indeed the business of her life.

"Miss Bell," she began. "You have, of course, made yourself acquainted with the principles of phrenology?"

Miss Bell very prudently disclaimed having a *thorough* acquaintance with the science; and as she did so in that equivocal manner, which leaves all acknowledged deficiency to be set down to the modesty of the speaker, the lady of the house went on.

It is of the utmost importance to me that the care of my children should be committed to one who perfectly understands my system of education. On these subjects one cannot speak too plainly. The advantage of the rising generation, the general amelioration of the condition of mankind, to say nothing of maternal feeling, demand it. Come here, my Lucy. Now, Miss Bell, you see at once what organs are here developed, and what are not. Those which are not, must be your especial study, for, as it is impossible for a person of common attain-

ments and understanding to pay the attention one wishes to every department of learning, you must observe in what faculties my children are most deficient, and bestow upon them all your care, accompanied by every stimulant you can invent. With regard to drawing, for instance, Lucy will need very little instruction in outline. Observe the fulness here. She will herself become perfect in form. But in colour, you see she is very deficient. You may therefore give her paints as soon as you please, and by all means urge her on to perfection in the use of them.

“Now Harry, my boy, come here, and let Miss Bell examine your head. Harry, I am sorry to say, exhibits a formation exceedingly like his papa’s. A great deal of the animal is here. You must do all that is possible with him, Miss Bell, to make him an intellectual being.”

“To make him what he can never be,” thought Rosa, but she thought in silence, and the lady went on.

“Sylvia, my love, do you come now. This girl, Miss Bell, is a child of precocious talent. Here you see all the fundamental principles of an intellectual character,—comparison, causality, and individuality—yes, individuality. These are the three organs described by Dr. Moon, as the three essentials of a complete character. Now this child, Miss Bell, requires keeping back—literally *unteaching*; because her bodily functions want stamina to support the exercise of even half the mental power

she is capable of bringing to bear upon any given point. This child, then, must be kept back.—She must play, when you are teaching the others.”

And all the while the poor little girl was looking up, and around her, with a stare of such hopeless vacuity, that Rosa began to think it would indeed be a work of unavailing labour, to subject her to the common process of school discipline.

“Now, Miss Bell, you perfectly understand me,” resumed Mrs. Vincent.

“Perfectly,” was the laconic reply, and the young governess was left to the solace of her own meditations.

“‘Delightful task!’” was Rosa’s first exclamation, on escaping to her own room. “So, it seems, I am to teach these children just what they are incapable of learning, and if there be anything they have the power of acquiring with facility, (which by the bye, I am very much inclined to doubt), such power must be left entirely to nature, if not eventually destroyed. ‘Delightful task,’ indeed! and that cold bony mother too, who means to try her pills upon me, I suppose, by way of making my looks approximate to her own. Oh, Alice Gordon! you said right. It is better to bear with the caprices of your friends, than with those of strangers, who, while they expect us to enter with the deepest interest into all the minutiae of their domestic doings, care no more about the tender ties we may have broken to devote ourselves to their service, than if

we had dropped from the clouds, or been created for that especial purpose."

Perhaps there is no fact that strikes the governess on first going out more painfully than this,—the interest she is expected to feel in every department of the stranger's home, and the length of time she is required to listen to family details; while no kind question is ever asked her of her own, and no reference is made to the emotions which might naturally be supposed to agitate her soul, on thus being severed from her own domestic circle.

Rosa felt that selfishness which so many have to feel, most deeply, and after yielding to the weakness of a long fit of weeping, she was roused to join the family at dinner, an event to which her curiosity to see the master, or rather him who ought to have been the master, gave a slight degree of interest.

Mr. Vincent, all things considered, looked quite as well as might have been expected, at least he looked as if he could enjoy his dinner; and it is probable, that the cordial welcome with which he greeted the new member of his household, owed something of its warmth to the aspect of his own good table. For here, in this single department, Mr. Vincent *did* rule, not with a rod of iron, but with a mild, genial, and salubrious sovereignty, that would have permitted his guests to be laved with melted butter, had such been the bent of their inclinations.

On one point, and one alone, Mr. and Mrs. Vincent thought alike, and acted in undeviating concert: they neither of them could endure to wait on time for their meals, beyond the regular appointed time; the one because he was hungry, the other because she deemed it highly pernicious to the human frame, for the gastric juice to be employed.

Mrs. Vincent, of course was dieted by Dr. Vincent. So were the children; and though their father assisted in helping them to large slices of what fell in his way, their plates were regularly diminished of all but the lawful portion, and then nicely measured out to them by the skill of a fully initiated in all the particulars of Mrs. Vincent's system.

What to do with the time after dinner, was a mystery to Rosa. Indeed what to do with any of the long hours she was likely to spend at Vincent Lodge, was more than she could tell, especially as the office of governess seemed to her a mere sinecure: for such was the necessity of saving, first to bodily health, of walking so many miles each day, or, if the weather was unfavourable, of going through a stated routine of in-door exercises, of lying on inclined planes, of doing nothing but of wholesome relaxation; and such the hoped-for unassisted developement of some of the most important intellectual faculties in the craniums of the children, that when Rosa appealed to Mrs. Vincent,

to portion out the hours of her children's study, so filled was each day with other necessary avocations, that from eight in the morning, until eight at night, there could not be found one.

This was really a serious evil. Dr. Moon must be consulted. He came accordingly, and his candid opinion was, that three hours study each day, with intervals of rest after each quarter of an hour thus employed, was sufficient for all children, and too much for most. Rosa was therefore under the necessity of conforming to this system, and the work of education proceeded accordingly.

It is scarcely necessary to say, that a few months of such experience convinced Rosa, that this was not the kind of life for her. Stay she could not. She did not believe that any body could; but then it seemed equally impossible to go home, and be triumphed over by the Gordons. She therefore wrote privately to Aunt Dinah, to look out for another situation for her, and in the mean time exerted all her powers of bearing, and forbearing to the utmost.

Had half the self-control she now exercised in the presence of those who were comparatively strangers, and who neither understood nor loved her, been exercised towards her own parents, how thankful and how happy would they both have been; but the system we are reprobating, is one that necessarily induces something too much like a waste of good *feelings*, except so far as relates to

their beneficial operation upon the minds where they exist.

How much of the disappointment, disgust, and dissatisfaction with the world, of which the morbidly sensitive complain, is owing to this cause,—that they have been generous, where generosity was not regarded as a virtue; kind, where kindness was not heeded; and considerate, where consideration was of no value. Surely it would be well, instead of reproaching the world with ingratitude, to look around and see whether we ourselves, rather than the world, have not been to blame; and whether by a happier and more judicious exercise of the christian graces which tend so much to alleviate the ills and enhance the pleasures of life, we might not have reaped a rich harvest of enjoyment, where we have found nothing but weeds and bitterness.

It is to those who love us—to those who are bound to us by the ties of nature, and sympathy, and affection, that we can render the path of life less irksome; that we can stretch out a helping hand in time of need; that we can pour sweetness and balm into the cup of which they drink. To the stranger, whose heart is closed against us, whose thoughts are not as our thoughts, and whose springs of feeling are to us as fountains sealed, we cannot, if we would, do this. We may study their wishes, deny ourselves, and thwart our inclinations to win their favour, but powerless as the feather cast upon the stream, our endeavours will not

penetrate beyond the surface, nor purchase the reward which natural affection, domestic love, and social fellowship would have yielded in return for half the efforts we thus have thrown away.

It is this unnatural state of things, this transplanting of a young and delicate plant into an uncongenial soil, that makes the office of the governess one of such peculiar difficulty. She sells her talents, with the necessary time of using them, for a stated sum of money, and to say the best of her situation, she is civilly and fairly treated. But is this all that woman needs? She is young, perhaps thoughtless, and on whom may she depend? She is affectionate, and who enters into her heart of hearts? She is lonely and sad, and who breaks in upon her solitude to cheer her drooping spirits? Will money reach the root of her calamity? Will clothes more costly than her parents wear, and a table spread with greater luxury than theirs, supply the cravings of her affection? Will the stated intervals of mental application to which she is bound by an irrevocable compact, lighten the burden of her soul? No; it is when surrounded by her own family, at her father's fire-side, the centre of domestic union, that woman learns best to feel, and adopt as her own, those graces which are the highest ornament of her character, those virtues which are the surest foundation of her happiness here and hereafter.

Rosa Bell looked anxiously every day for the

arrival of a letter from Aunt Dinah. Each hour endured at Vincent Lodge was becoming more irksome to her than the last; yet still her pride rebelled against the idea of returning home. Was it not possible to beguile her sad thoughts by some amusement, even amongst the Vincents? She had tried the children, both in head and heart, but physic and phrenology had made them little better than automats. Sometimes she thought the glance of Mr. Vincent's eye betrayed a lurking desire to share the sympathy, or at least the smiles of a sister in bondage, and Rosa was equally ready for either; for her natural flow of spirits, repelled, but not subdued, seemed the more ready to burst forth into extravagance, from having been so long restrained. Already she had begun to look at Mr. Vincent whenever the *system* of his wife or Dr. Moon betrayed the lady of the house into more than wonted absurdity. Already, a smile, ominous of future evil, had begun to mark this slight, but perfectly intelligible, intercourse. Already, too, had the eye of the wife detected this medium of intercourse, and the consequence was, that in peering about upon the cranium of the governess, she had discovered a frightful deficiency in the region of conscientiousness.

How long she might have tolerated such a defect in any member of her household was never exactly proved, for Rosa was fortunate enough to discover

a way of escape, as unexpected as it was welcome to the parties most interested in the separation.

Often had Rosa, since her residence at Vincent Lodge, heard the name of Otway ; but it excited no interest in her mind, except by its connection with the poet, and with a talented and amiable boy who had been a pupil at Mr. Gordon's. The Otways of whom she now heard were said to be rather odd kind of people, making a great pretence to religion and all that sort of thing ; and as their estate joined immediately upon that of Mr. Vincent, and they were in the habit of showing a very slight kind of sociability together, there was ample scope for the gossip of the neighbourhood to convey a detail of their oddities from one house to another, and not unfrequently to make them contribute to the entertainment of an evening party at Vincent Lodge.

Rosa had heard of what was called their *ostentatious* subscriptions to public charities,—of their alms-giving, and of the pharisaical punctuality with which they went, regardless of wind and weather, twice every Sunday, to their place of worship, where it was charitably surmised they thanked God that they were not as others were ; and she was not less weary of the often-repeated story, than predisposed to be repelled and disgusted with the characters which gave occasion to these remarks.

One circumstance, however, imparted a zest to her anticipations of seeing them, and judging for herself, on a particular evening when they were

invited to Vincent Lodge, and when, she was told, she would have to contribute her share to the entertainment of the party, by exercising her musical talents.

Mr. Otway was not a widower. He was separated from his wife, and there was no doubt, in the minds of those who made themselves busy with the subject, that his own puritanical notions had rendered it impossible for a gay, beautiful woman, as Mrs. Otway was said to have been, to exist beneath the same roof with him. There were also graver and more secret whispers afloat, that Mrs. Otway had left her husband's protection, from reasons of a melancholy and disgraceful nature; and so sedulously was the story propagated,—so often was the secret made public, and the melancholy fact related, and caught up to be related again, that a stranger, unacquainted with the benevolence of the narrators, would have thought the business of making known this story, which after all owed its existence to suspicion without knowledge, constituted one of the most pleasing duties of their lives.

On the evening of the party, Mr. Otway was accompanied only by his son, his daughter not yet having been introduced to general society; and Rosa recognized at once the handsome, open countenance of the boy she had casually seen at Mr. Gordon's.

It was one proof of the natural strength of Rosa's affections, that her heart always bounded towards

those who were associated with her parents, her home, and the days of her childhood. Gerald Otway, though but a youth, was sufficiently attractive in his own person to engage the attention of the most fastidious eye; but it was not merely the fine expression of his intelligent countenance, which made Rosa watch with intense anxiety for some movement amongst the guests, that might bring him nearer to the neglected corner of the room, where the governess, a cypher without an introduction, was seated; neither was it with the flattering hope of exciting some interest in return: it was simply to talk with him of Waterton, of the Gordons, of Alice, and George, that she wished to be near him.

While wholly intent upon the son, she perceived, however, that the father, after making his way across the room, had taken a vacant chair beside her;—not that he either knew or cared to whom he was addressing himself, but he saw she was neglected, and that was enough for him.

And never—never to be forgotten in after life, are such little acts of sympathy and kindness, to those who have sat apart in society—an atom separated from the great sum of common feeling,—a prisoner, where all around was freedom,—a lone pilgrim in a peopled desert,—a mockery of humanity, endowed with all the functions of natural life, but denied the liberty and the benefit of their exercise.

Mr. Otway was a man who had scarcely passed the meridian of life: his countenance, however,

was deeply marked with the traces of sad experience. Over his high forehead there waved only a few threads of silver hair; his step was firm, his figure erect, his voice and movements energetic; but he looked as though he might have lived a hundred years of feeling, and as if he had already endured so much, that a hundred more would scarcely deprive him of the faculty of endurance.—He was always the same, at least, to every human eye,—collected, self-possessed, and so far as related to excitement, emotion, caprice, or eccentricity, perfectly subdued.

“How,” said Rosa to herself, “could this man ever be called absurd?” The mystery was accounted for, by his being religious; than which, a greater absurdity scarcely presents itself to the minds of those who are not so.—Not that religion itself would be objected to.—Oh! no. Amongst Christians, as we all profess to be, this could never be the case. Indeed, according to the general consent of society, religion is allowed to be a very good sort of thing. It is the duty of every one to be religious, but their religion should be without show, without peculiarity,—in short, without distinction from irreligion; for it seems to be the offices, requirements, and characteristics of religion that give offence to the world. Strip it of all these, and the name is not without acceptance amongst mankind.

Rosa Bell had not conversed long with Mr. Otway,

before she came to the conclusion that he was a man who could not, according to the strict and proper meaning of the word, be absurd. "Why," said she, to herself, "was I not the child of such a father?—I would never have left *him* to be a governess." And then her curiosity about his wife rose higher, and she speculated in various ways upon what could have induced a rational woman to separate herself from such a husband.

Before arriving at any probable conclusion, however, she was summoned to her evening duty, and seating herself before the instrument, she cast one glance around the room, to see who was likely to accompany her. The guests were not musical, and it was evident her powers were to be called into exercise merely for the purpose of setting every one at liberty to talk to their next neighbour, without being overheard. Under such circumstances, she felt no hesitation in selecting such music as pleased her own fancy; and the name of Otway, connected with the countenance and manners of the gentleman who had so kindly noticed her in her obscurity, having, by some imperceptible association, taken her back in idea to the Gordons, and the scenes of her early youth, she chose out a simple melody, which in those days she had often sung for the gratification of a partial audience.

Relieved from all idea of being listened to or observed, Rosa yielded up her soul to the feelings most powerful in their influence upon it; and,

touched even to sadness by the memory of the past,
she sung with peculiar pathos the following lines:—

Oh! blythe was the summer, when we two were young,
And brightly the morning beam'd over us then;
And sweet was the music the forest-bird sung,
Its own lay of gladness, to streamlet and glen.

Does the dew even fall, now, so silvery white?
Are the meadows so green, or the mountains so high?
Is the sun, when he sets in his glory, so bright?
Or the moon, when she rises the queen of the sky?

Do the gems of the ocean?—the flowers of the earth?
The sunbeams of morning, so brilliant remain?
Is there aught we then valued, for beauty or worth,
We shall ever behold with such rapture again?

Is there aught we then purchas'd with hope, that has prov'd
So sweet, or so fair, as when first it was seen?
Is there aught that is left us, of all we have lov'd,
Save the cruel remembrance that such things have been?

Oh! say not that time such a tyrant must prove;
The bright, and the beautiful, both may decay;
But is there not left the unchangeable love,
That was born with the past, and will ne'er fade away?

And is there not left the sweet hope, that has grown
From spring-time and summer, returning again;
When the bird to the bare leafless forest had flown,
And the cold winds of autumn had swept o'er the plain?

Then say not that nature has nought but her bloom,
Her fruits, and her flowers in their pride, to bestow;—
She has treasures that fail not beyond the cold tomb,
Too bright,—too celestial,—to perish below.

The first words had scarcely passed her lips, when she found that Gerald Otway was by her side; and, as he faithfully turned over the leaves of the music book, she saw that his eye was fixed upon the page with deep interest.

"That is George Gordon's old song," said he, almost before she had ceased to sing: "where in the world did *you* meet with it."

"George Gordon gave it to me," said Rosa; "and you must pardon me if in my turn, I ask how *you* know any thing about George Gordon?"

"We were schoolfellows," replied Gerald, looking earnestly in her face.—"I was three years under his father's tuition, and an inmate of his happy home,—and now, a thought strikes me, you are the very same beautiful Miss Bell, George used to talk about so often,—your name is the same. I saw it in the music book."

"I believe I am the same," said Rosa, endeavouring to laugh away the embarrassment of so unceremonious an introduction. "Those who see little of the world," she added, "are apt to overestimate that little, and imagination, you know, will sometimes do a good deal towards making our friends beautiful."

Of this very proper speech, at least half was lost upon the ear for which it was intended. Gerald Otway could not stay to hear fine speeches, when his interest or curiosity were excited; and he was already leading his father from a distant part of the

room, to enjoy with him the very agreeable discovery he had made.

Rosa Bell was seldom introduced to what is called good society, without experiencing a sense of shame, to think that Peter and Martha Bell were her parents. On the present occasion, however, it had not at first occurred to her as a source of mortification, or regret. But no sooner did she catch a glimpse of Mr. Otway advancing towards her, with the evident expectation of being informed who she really was, than she was struck with the contrast between his noble figure, and that of her own worthy father,—between his objects of pursuit and ambition, and those of her kind-hearted mother. Little did she know the character of him who now held out his hand to acknowledge her as a newly-discovered friend.

“My son tells me,” said he, “that you and he were schoolfellows beneath the same roof.”

“Not exactly so,” said Gerald. “Beneath the same roof we certainly were taught, but thanks to our prudent teachers, I do not think we ever met before.”

“Rather thank your excellent memory,” said Rosa. “I recollect you once leading my pony through the stream in the village, after it had refused to go at my bidding.”

“Did I? Well, I dare say I was too modest to look in your face. That is the only way I can account for my not knowing you again.”

"And I have really the pleasure," resumed Mr. Otway, "of meeting with one who has enjoyed the high privilege of Mrs. Gordon's instruction and example?"

Rosa blushed again, and this time it was not with pleasure, for she felt that the advantages so highly prized by others, had done little for her. But her serious reflections were now interrupted by Mrs. Vincent reminding her of her duty; for the company, predisposed to think the Otways very peculiar people, were falling into whispers about the oddity of paying such attentions to a governess; and the lady of the house having just found her last listener turn away from her maladies, and her medical man, thought it high time for Rosa to recommence her labours at the piano.

It was not quite the thing, however, for the whole evening to be occupied with the music of a governess. There were very inferior performers, who did *hope they should not be asked to play*, and these hopes were expressed so many times, and to so many different people, that at last these modest individuals *were* asked, and Rosa had time to hold, with Mr. Otway and his son, one of those delightful conversations, to the exclusiveness, and enjoyment of which, nothing can contribute more effectually than the general buzz of a large party, mixed with the din of music that nobody cares to hear.

With a disposition naturally impetuous, and open, to a fault,—with feelings long unparticipated

in, now invited to a full disclosure,—it is scarcely necessary to say, that Rosa kept little untold that related to her present situation, or her ardent desire to escape from it; and though the elder Otway listened with a look of grave disapprobation which checked her animated description of the Vincents, he thought so much consideration was due to her youth, and the uncongenial nature of her situation, that he looked upon her with peculiar kindness, and compassion; while charmed with her candour, her spirit, and perhaps her beauty, his son appeared to think no object in the room so worthy of his attention as the young governess.

This was the first pleasant evening Rosa had spent at Vincent Lodge, and when she received from Mr. Otway his kind parental “good night,” she felt as if he was indeed the friend for whose approbation she could do, or be anything.

And thus it is. For some persons, in some situations, and with some advantages, we are always persuading ourselves we could do what conscience dictates, and be exactly what we ought. As if the Disposer of all human affairs had made the Christian character one of impossible attainment, by placing each individual in circumstances exactly calculated to retard their spiritual progress; though he will not unfrequently allow, that another in his place, with different feelings, temperament and tendency, might effectually accomplish what he fails in.

Surely this idea, so prevalent amongst mankind,

or rather so frequently the result of our secret meditations, and made so fatally the hindrance to our best endeavours, deserves the condemnation of blasphemy against the Most High,—against Him who has placed us where we are, not in ignorance of our wants and capabilities, or in heedlessness of our eternal welfare; but who, with a clear knowledge, and strict oversight of all the secret windings of the human heart, has placed us where he knows that every seeming disadvantage might be converted into a means of spiritual help, and every discouragement into a ground of everlasting hope.

CHAPTER X.

Nor many days after the introduction of Rosa Bell to the Otways, a note was put into her hands from the elder gentleman. She had spoken freely to them both, perhaps too freely, of her desire to leave the family at Vincent Lodge; and, after mature deliberation, Mr. Otway had determined to invite her to become a member of his household, until a more eligible situation should offer. His ostensible reasons for making this proposal, were the compassion he could not help feeling for any rational young woman condemned to Mrs. Vincent's society and system,—with the desire he entertained of showing some proof of respect to a friend of the Gordons, and one whom he could not suppose to have lived so long in habits of familiar intercourse with them, uninfluenced by the many substantial benefits to be derived from their society.

It is true, that in the conversation he had held with Rosa, she did not appear to him particularly *sage* in her remarks, or guarded in her expressions;

and therefore, from the impressions thus received of her character, he deemed it best to keep some of his reasons for inviting her untold. The reader may easily understand the nature of them, when we add, that the family of Mr. Otway consisted of a son and daughter; the latter a young lady of seventeen, for whose benefit and instruction he had long been endeavouring to meet with a suitable companion—one who might assist her in perfecting herself in those branches of learning, in which her extremely delicate health had rendered her rather deficient. Not that Isabel Otway was an ignorant girl; she was, alas! too learned in some of the deepest sources of human joy and sorrow. She was too sensitive, too fond of music and poetry, and of the mystical lore of romance. Her father had often deplored this tendency of his daughter's heart and mind, and ever since he had clearly seen the growing evil, his best endeavours had been used to eradicate it. He did not know,—for seldom do we observe by what means the early bias is given to the infant mind,—that the melancholy under which his daughter suffered, owed its origin, in great measure to her having been the unconscious witness of his sorrows, at one particular time of his life, when sorrow had been his daily portion. Perhaps the child herself could not remember, or remembered indistinctly, how she used to be folded to her father's bosom, and held in his sad embrace, when she ought to have been at play, while he yielded up his

soul to an anguish, of whose bitterness the world knew nothing.

Had the mourner been a wiser man, he would have chosen solitude, rather than the companionship of his delicate and feeble child. But there are seasons of desolation in which we cling to the frailest things in creation for mere fellowship in our grief—to any familiar object that has been known and loved in our brighter days—to a plant—a domestic animal—a household treasure—how much more then to a beloved child !

The afflicted parent had felt this weakness to its utmost extent, and never supposing he could be planting an injury where he would have conferred a blessing,—he told the story of his wretchedness to the unconscious ear of his infant; and though ignorant of the letter, she seemed ever afterwards to have partaken too deeply of its spirit.

Miss Otway was not discontented; she was happy in her own way; but it was a sad and silent one; and when her father thought of the fine open countenance of Rosa Bell—her lively manners, and the talent she seemed to possess for amusing and being amused—he wished that along with these natural gifts, she might possess a mind so tempered by religion, as to render her in all respects an eligible companion for his daughter.

“ She is exactly the sort of character, it would do Isabel good to associate with,” said Gerald, to whom his father had communicated no more than

his intention of inviting Rosa as a visitor. "She is always better, both in health and spirits, when I have been at home a few weeks; and I flatter myself there is a great resemblance between Miss Bell and myself."

"Flatter yourself with no such thing," replied his father, smiling. "I have seldom seen such finished manners as Miss Bell's, in any one so young. Flatter yourself with no such thing, until you can learn not to run, when you ought to walk; and not to explode in an extacy, whenever you find the least cause for satisfaction. I wish, Gerald, you would remember, that in six months from this time, you will be twenty years old; but above all, I wish you would remember, that a certain degree of sedateness and dignity of manner are not only ornaments, but almost essentials in the christian character."

"Dear father," said Gerald, "how often you remind me of this. Is there any thing in my conduct that really displeases you?"

"No, Gerald, not in what would be commonly called your conduct; but in your manners, I do wish sometimes you would be more serious."

"I think, father," observed Gerald, "you are either very unfortunate in your children, or very difficult to please. There is poor Isabel moping from morning till night. You are not satisfied with her; and I in the opposite extreme, am not so happy as to give you satisfaction."

"You have pronounced my condemnation, Gerald," replied his father. "You have left me no alternative but that of being difficult to please; for no man circumstanced as I am, could reasonably think himself unfortunate in his children."

"And no man circumstanced as I am," said Gerald, "could think his father difficult to please; so let us leave the subject for one more agreeable; and pray tell me what Miss Bell has replied to your note?"

"I refer you to her own words," replied Mr. Otway, handing to his son the reply he had just received, in which Rosa had expressed, without reserve, the grateful feelings his kind invitation had awakened.

"A very ladylike note," said Gerald, folding it up, and looking with great gravity at the direction. "Do you think, father," he added, "that Miss Bell is a religious character?"

"That is just the point I wish to have decided," replied his father.

"I should think not decidedly religious," observed Gerald. "But she must be amiable, with such a countenance."

"And is that sufficient, Gerald?"

"No, certainly not."

"A mere amiable woman, my son, is a being to be loved, and cared for, and cherished. A religious woman is a being who diffuses a sustaining and elevating influence all around her, so that she not only

takes a high place in society herself, but assists all who are willing to attain the same eminence."

"Was my mother a religious woman, father?"

Mr. Otway started from his seat. He might have seen a workman from the window with whom he wished to speak,—or he might have recollected some commission for his servant before he went to town. Whatever was the cause of his abrupt retreat, Gerald neither remarked upon it, nor drew any conclusion from the manner in which it was made; but taking a book from the library shelf, quietly pursued his morning studies, without being interrupted by his father's return.

With all his apparent frivolity and want of serious thought, Gerald Otway was a young man of uncommon talents, and great facility in acquiring knowledge. As a classic scholar, his attainments were unrivalled amongst his compeers. In mathematics he was less successful, and in his theological pursuits, he often needed reference to his father's superior judgment.

Had he assumed any thing like dignity, or esteemed himself the more for his acquirements, he might certainly have occupied a more important station in society; but having attained all the knowledge he possessed with little difficulty and less ambition, he could not understand how the same attainments had any right to confer distinction upon others. To him it was infinitely preferable to be good and happy, than to be great or learned;

and from the very excess of his own capability of enjoyment, he not unfrequently overstepped the bounds of wisdom, bringing upon himself the frequent condemnation of those, who think that a constant flow of animal spirits is inconsistent with a religious life and conversation.

The penetration of Rosa Bell was never more at fault than in the opinion she formed of Gerald Otway, from their first interview. She thought him what is commonly called a gay young man,—not depraved in heart, but naturally and habitually fond of pleasure, whether lawful or unlawful.

She might have known that a course of conduct, such as his conscience could not approve, would have checked the fresh, free overflow of his boyish spirits, and made him more prematurely old.

Immediately after receiving the welcome invitation to Mr. Otway's house, Rosa commenced the necessary formalities preparatory to her leaving Vincent Lodge,—a step that was considerably facilitated by Mrs. Vincent's increasing inclination to part with her. In fact, ever since the treasonable glances, detected in their passage across the table, Rosa's cranium had fallen into disrepute with her patroness; and, judging from the many hollows stated to exist, where there ought to have been the most hopeful prominences, it might have been a piece of honeycomb.

But, besides wanting candour, conscientiousness, and veneration, with most of the intellectual facul-

ties, Rosa had an unpardonable fault,—her imprudent diet: not that she ate too much, but so invariably the wrong thing, that Mrs. Vincent could scarcely forgive her for remaining alive and well, and thus defying, in her own person, the system of diet insisted upon by Dr. Moon, and approved by all rational people.

Thus the lady and her governess parted with a degree of good-will, which owed its existence to the fact that they were not likely to remain one hour longer beneath the same roof.

Until Rosa Bell became an inmate with the Otway's, she had not been aware that a Miss Peterson, niece to Mr. Otway, was a member of their household; and when this bustling little personage received her at the door, her preconceived notions of the elegant and interesting Isabel Otway suffered considerable diminution. A second glance, however, convinced her that this lady, who did the honours of the house in a very efficient manner, must be nearly twice the age of Miss Otway, and her hopes of forming a romantic friendship with the young lady once more revived.

It is probable that Isabel was roused from her habitual languor by anticipations of a similar nature; for scarcely had Rosa taken possession of the apartment appropriated to her own use, when a gentle tap at the door startled her from the contemplation of a figure, whose reflected image was seldom seen without some sense of satisfaction.

"May I come in?" was asked by a voice of uncommon sweetness, and in the next moment the appearance of her new friend convinced Rosa that there was a higher style of beauty than her own.

'A tall, pale girl, with dark eyes and raven hair,' was the description generally given of Isabel Otway; but there were a few minds of more delicate perceptions, and finer tone of feeling, to whom the perfect elegance of her figure, the symmetry of her features, and the noble expression of her countenance, rendered her more than beautiful. The outline of her face was as much like her brother's as feminine delicacy would permit; and when she smiled, it was with the same radiance of look and benignity of expression. But, instead of the wild luxuriance of his hair, her own lay in sable waves upon her forehead; and, instead of the clear blue eyes with which he looked abroad upon the world, fearless of its dangers, and unsuspecting of its snares; her own, so intensely dark that none could pronounce upon their colour, looked as if, from being shadowed from without by a perpetual cloud, they had become centred and inward in their perceptions, rather penetrating into the depths of the human soul, than looking forth for objects in which that soul might lawfully take pleasure.

It was scarcely probable that, with such a character, Rosa Bell should feel much sympathy, her own being composed of materials so essentially different,—quickness, versatility, and liability to im-

pression from everything around her. Still she looked with extreme admiration upon the gentle and graceful being beside her ; and when she thought of her delicate health, and the manner in which she was shut out from the common enjoyments of youth, her admiration, blended with compassion, assumed all the tenderness of love.

Mr. Otway and his son were both absent when Rosa arrived, but they received her on their return with the most cordial welcome ; and, before the conclusion of the first day of her visit, she felt as much at home as if she had known the family for years.

Miss Peterson was one of those well-meaning, active, resolutely useful people, not unfrequently found as appendages to religious families. She was one, who, taking the tone of the characters around her without their depth, and without their perception of fitness and propriety, was ever ready to run on errands of charity, dispensing food to the hungry, instruction to the ignorant, reproof to the faulty, and condemnation to the incorrigible.

Seldom did a tale of sickness or sorrow reach the ear of the housekeeper of Rashleigh Hall, than away went Miss Peterson, and the sufferer was soon hunted up, the cause of pain or grief investigated with no great delicacy, and remedies, either for mind or body, applied with an unflinching hand, after which she would return to talk for the whole evening about *her* " old man," *her* " poor woman,"

or *her* "dear little child," who would be thinking long of the time until she called to see them again.

There is a large portion of the human family who would infinitely rather enjoy the privilege of complaining with some little cause, than lose this privilege by having the cause entirely removed. To such perverse individuals Miss Peterson was an intolerable bore, as well as to those who, conscious of their own culpability as sinners, had still no wish to *go and sin no more*.

Perhaps, if the whole truth was told, she was sometimes also a slight annoyance to those from whom she derived her insatiable thirst for doing good, in season and out of season; for there was no depth in her zeal, no calculation upon remote consequences in her assiduous endeavours. Nothing but a strong impulse to be doing, and a lively conviction that if she attended all bible meetings, distributed tracts, and became a member of the temperance society, she should be doing sufficiently well; and the more root this conviction obtained in her mind, the faster did she run from door to door, distributing advertisements of sermons to be preached, collecting penny subscriptions from the poor, lending and gathering up good books, and hurrying little children away to school before their hands were washed, or their lessons for the day were learned.

Not that we would by any means insinuate that *there is no virtue, and no utility, in a faithful and*

active performance of these duties. Many a lonely and benighted cottager looks up from his cheerless hearth to welcome the step of the blessed messenger who brings him glad tidings of a world where labour, and pain, and penury shall be no more. But when these good works are made to constitute the *whole* business of life, without being accompanied by the heart work of religion, without the deep exercise of the devoted soul, producing patience, humility, and all other Christian virtues, there is in such religion a palpable pretension, which not unfrequently, to the worldly or superficial observer, renders religion itself a stumbling-block and a rock of offence.

Rosa Bell had not seen much of Miss Peterson's religion, before she decided upon never making it her own. Indeed she could not see her come in from her evening's walk, with her bag full of tracts, her list of poor people who wanted blankets, and broth, and her memoranda of all the items to which her daily charity extended, without feeling a strong propensity to mimic the importance of her manner, and make a jest of the whole proceeding. She was not quite sure, however, how such an exhibition on her part would be regarded by the family, who never on any occasion, were guilty of turning serious things into jest. Rosa could not understand the construction of their minds. They smiled at almost every thing ridiculous, except Miss Peterson, the methodist preacher, and

the manner in which the clergyman read prayers. Mr. Otway and his daughter might be pardoned for this singularity, but why Gerald should look grave when there was so much to laugh at, was more than she could account for to herself, for she was far from understanding the best parts of Gerald's character. Perhaps they were not sufficiently conspicuous—perhaps he was too trifling in his general conversation—too impetuous in his manners, and too exciteable in his feelings.

Whatever the cause might be, Rosa's penetration was at fault, and though she was daily less disposed to suspect him of gaiety, she could not believe he was religious. She did not know it was the very absence of all wish to be otherwise, that gave a freedom to his words and manners, which to an eye unpractised in the art of remarking the minute distinctions between vice and virtue, might on slight observation, be mistaken for the licence of lawless habits.

In the mind of Gerald Otway, the religious principles, so carefully instilled by his father at a very early age, had obtained such deep root, that he never thought of questioning their validity; and protected in his hitherto slight acquaintance with the world, by the firm and unfailing conviction that all which appertains to man's eternal welfare, is of infinitely more importance than mere personal or immediate gratification, he thus escaped the temptations to which most young men are liable, and

went smoothly and pleasantly along the path of life, unconscious of the anguish of a divided heart, and unacquainted with any reason why he should not be happy.

And thus it might have been with many who are now tasting the true bitterness of grief. Had this essential truth—the paramount importance of religion, been sufficiently impressed upon their minds in early youth, what is generally regarded as temptation would have been no temptation to them, because they would have loved the ways of peace and holiness, better than all the allurements of a deceitful world.

Who has not felt on some of the most spirit-stirring occasions of his life, the littleness, the emptiness of all sublunary things! Perhaps this temporary excitement of mind may have been called forth by listening to the eloquent discourse of an eminent preacher — by contemplating the starry heavens, or by experiencing in the secret of his own heart, those visitations of mercy, which come like the shower to the earth, refreshing all that is fruitful, and invigorating all that is capable of perfection.

From whatever cause this conviction of the extreme importance of practical religion arises, it must be familiar to the reflections of all who have thought seriously on the subject; and they must also have been persuaded, that if from the solemn scene of public worship, from the solitudes of na-

ture, or from the place of secret prayer, they could have carried the same strong impression away with them, and borne it in their hearts through the business, and beneath the burden of each succeeding day, the temptations of the world would have been to them of none effect, the pleasures of the world would have been like an idle picture unworthy of their regard, and the cares of the world as an heap of ashes.

Of how much importance too in winning others to the same cause, would be the brightness, the vigour, and the joy, accompanying this conviction; instead of the deadness, the disappointment, the alternate langour and cruel conflict, which denote a half surrender of the heart. How cheering then would be the contemplation of the countenance of youth, lighted up with the one only hope of unbounded felicity; instead of the heavy eye, the haggard cheek, and the care-worn brow, by which the countenance of that man is marked, who strives to be religious, without giving up the world.

We know that the life of the Christian is justly described as a warfare, a conflict, a perpetual struggle; but do we not make it more so by our early disobedience and want of faith in the promises of the Most High? by our refusing to lay hold of these promises until the ear is satisfied with hearing? until the eye is weary of beholding, and the heart has loved its last? until, to use the emphatic words of the preacher, *the golden bowl is broken, the silver*

cord is loosed, and the grass-hopper has become a burden? Then with nothing but tears to offer, man is sometimes willing to turn from a world he can no longer enjoy, or serve, or profit by; and casting himself with the burden of his sins and sorrows at the throne of mercy, consents to receive pardon, and to live.

Rosa Bell had tried the experiment of living with those whose pretensions to mental superiority were great, but until the time of her becoming a guest with the Otways, she had never lived with a family so decidedly intellectual. The Gordons read much, and conversed much on the subjects about which they read, but they were poor, and industrious, and made it so much a point of duty to regulate the economy of their own household, and attend to the claims of their friends and poorer neighbours, that Rosa had always found it difficult to reconcile their habits to her own ideas of intellectual refinement.

With the Otways the case was widely different. Though their pretensions were not greater than the Gordons, their affluent circumstances separated them from the same necessities, and they were consequently more entirely the objects of Rosa's admiration.

"If my father had been such a man as Mr. Otway," she was perpetually saying to herself,—and then the image of her worthy, useful, bustling mother, came like a blot upon her pleasant pictures,

and her very soul rebelled against the ordination by which her lot had been cast beneath a farmer's roof.

While associating with the Graftons, and their circle of friends, she had blushed to think of the low rank in society which her own family was destined to occupy, but now that her heart was filled with profound reverence for the refinement of mind, as well as manners, conspicuous in those around her, she blushed for the very parents whose disinterested solicitude for her good had induced them to purchase for her every advantage their means could compass, and who thus had afforded her a presumptive title to turn back upon them with contempt and ingratitude.

From reflections upon home associations, Rosa was accustomed to recur with infinitely greater satisfaction to herself and her attainments; and finding that it required a considerable fund of solid information to keep pace with the general tone of conversation at Rashleigh Hall, she felt happy in being able to call to remembrance, not only all the names of things in earth, air, and water, which she had learned with parrot-like facility at school, but also all the technicalities of literature acquired in the society at Laurel Cottage.

To the right application, as well as the frequent exhibition of this sum of knowledge, she directed her endeavours with such success, that she believed Mr. Otway himself was astonished at the extent of

her acquirements. That he was charmed with her society she could not doubt, for he sought opportunities of walking and conversing with her alone, and she was beginning to indulge a faint hope that he would eventually make choice of her as the companion of his daughter.

How many agreeable ideas flowed in upon her mind in connexion with this hope, it would scarcely be just, and certainly not generous, to inform the reader. All young ladies have their secrets, and the number and nature of the appendages they can attach to an ill-founded and unsubstantial hope, ought certainly to be amongst the most inviolate.

On returning one day from a botanizing excursion with Mr. Otway, Rosa was startled by his stopping suddenly, and fixing upon her that keen searching look, that was the only thing she did not like about him.

"You seem to know a great deal, my young friend," said he, for she had been expatiating upon plants, and minerals, and, in short, upon almost all the natural phenomena of the earth, described in those volumes of questions and answers so incalculably valuable to the ignorant who teach, as well as to the ignorant who learn; "you seem to know a great deal, are you quite sure that you are well informed as to the true value of all knowledge?"

"Oh, yes," said Rosa, without hesitation.

"Then perhaps you will favour me with your sen-

timents on this subject as freely as you have done with your information on many others."

Rosa looked up astonished. The being she most admired on earth stood before her in all his majesty, waiting for her reply to a question, whose serious import she understood no more than if he had spoken to her in an unknown tongue.

"I believe I do not fully comprehend your meaning," she said at last with painful embarrassment.

"Ah, my dear girl," said her friend, kindly drawing her arm within his, "you have much to learn yet, with all your knowledge. You must have observed that I have been at some pains to seek your society, and you may very reasonably suppose I have done this, not merely for the charms of your conversation. Of these I would not willingly have deprived my son and daughter, but that I might have an opportunity of judging for myself what is the progress you have made in religious and moral as well as intellectual attainments; in short, in that which alone has any right to be called education. I find you have been learning, as it were, the letters of your alphabet, and that you have yet to arrange and combine them before you can read so as to understand, and still less to apply to your own use, the truths revealed in the Book of Life.

"To be skilled in all arts, learned in all sciences, and acquainted with the principles and properties of

all natural things, are attainments worthy the ambition of rational and intelligent beings, but surely it is of infinitely more importance what we are, than what we know : it behoves us to be diligent in acquiring that wisdom which can regulate our affections, as well as enlighten our understandings.

“ I have often thought that the humble and unpretending Christian, who, through the blessed influence of the Spirit of divine love, has learned to control his own passions, to regulate his own desires, and to devote himself, without hesitation and without selfishness, to the service of his Maker, will be estimated in the great day of account, as a being of higher grade, even in the scale of knowledge, than he who has penetrated the mysteries of nature, without having learned to subdue one selfish or pernicious inclination.

“ Think of these things, my young friend, and esteem yourself a child in wisdom, until you have become intimately acquainted with your Bible, thoroughly instructed in that faith which is the sole foundation of the Christian's hope, and finally admitted into fellowship with the humble followers of Christ.”

CHAPTER XI.

AFTER the conversation described in the foregoing chapter, it was not likely that Rosa Bell should feel so much at ease as she had previously done, in the company of Mr. Otway. Convinced that his manner of looking upon the world, of regarding the actions of mankind, and of judging of the conventional rules of society in general, were essentially different from her own—convinced, in short, that his standard of excellence and hers were not the same, it now seemed impossible to converse with him freely, even on topics of common and familiar interest; for Mr. Otway was not one to glide over the surface of things, and leave his hearers in doubt whether he penetrated beyond. His conversation was of the kind which seldom left any important fact separate from the great chain of connexion between the physical and moral worlds, or any truth without its fundamental principle being clearly stated, and candidly discussed.

In vain might Rosa have attempted to go along with him in this exercise of thought. She could not even follow, for her knowledge consisted merely of the names of things, without comparison, deduction, or conclusion ; and, therefore, she was not unwilling to find herself consigned almost entirely to the companionship of Gerald and his sister, to the latter of whom she became more strongly attached, as the best points of her character were gradually developed.

At first she had regarded Isabel as a girl of languid energies and morbid mind, whose tone of feeling was too high for common fellowship. She soon discovered, however, that her languor was the effect of constitutional delicacy, increased by the necessity of exclusion from the common pastimes of early youth,—that beneath the morbid surface of her mind, were deep springs of natural and healthy feeling, which sometimes lighted up her countenance with inexpressible beauty, giving music to her voice, life to her affections, and energy to her benevolence ; while for the high and somewhat romantic tone of her mind there was this excuse—she knew nothing of the world, except as she had become acquainted with it through the medium of poetry. She had conversed occasionally with the literary characters who frequented her father's house, and she believed them to be a fair average of mankind. Besides which, her father and her brother were the sole objects of her affection. From

their minds, and from the books in which such minds are reflected, she had obtained her knowledge of human nature : no wonder, then, that the extreme refinement of her own should have taught her to shrink from the vice which she heard of as existing in the world, with a sort of horror, that scarcely admitted a sufficient mixture of charity.

Of pride in her own person, her own capabilities, or even her own purity, no one could have accused her ; but from pride in her parentage, and in the merits of those with whom she was most intimately connected, there was some reason to fear she could not have been fully acquitted. Indeed, so entire was the concord, so unbounded the affection subsisting between Isabel and her brother, that in their union they seemed to form a perfect whole ; and never was Gerald so interesting as when his sister awakened his tenderest compassion, or Isabel so amiable as when her brother compelled her to smile.

To the inexperienced mind of this young visionary, the whole mass of human beings were divided into two distinct classes—the good and the evil. But while the latter were abstractedly the objects of her contempt and abhorrence, such was her natural benevolence of feeling, that she seldom came in contact with an individual whom she could find in her heart to condemn, as standing on the lower side of the line of demarcation. Rosa Bell, she was confident, did not : she was too sweet-

tempered, too beautiful, and, in short, she loved her too well. With some of her ideas of personal religion she could not entirely accord; but she was becoming daily more interested in the sentiments of her young friend, and more disposed to think, that though new to her, they might be founded on principles as substantial as her own.

Mr. Otway saw the evil likely to result from his daughter's natural disposition to believe and trust, and to submit her own judgment to the guidance of those who would take the trouble of deciding for her; but, much as he deplored it, he could not make up his mind to part with Rosa as a guest, for she had an easy, guileless way of winning the affections of those around her, to which even he was not insensible. As a companion for his daughter, he had for some time been convinced she was most unfit. Still, his solicitude about what she might meet with in the untried world upon which she was rashly entering, mingled with the charm of her conversation, her sincerity, and her grateful affection, induced a weakness of purpose on his part, to which he might have yielded for some time longer, had she not, by her own unguarded manners, brought on that crisis in her fate, to which she had lately learned to look with increasing dread, yet sometimes with increasing hope that she might eventually escape from it.

It happened one day, that Rosa, Isabel, and Gerald were conversing in their usual familiar way

together, while Mr. Otway sat in a distant part of the room, with a book in his hand, from which his attention was attracted by the following words:

"May I ask, Rosa," said Gerald, for he had already begun to treat her with the freedom of a brother, "to what religious society you belong?"

"My father and mother," replied Rosa, "are very good church-going people."

"But you?" continued Gerald, "you are, if I guess aright, very near my own age. Have you never felt it your duty to unite yourself to any religious society?"

"No," replied Rosa, who had no idea, on any occasion, of disguising the truth; "I hate all sectarian prejudices. I consider it quite possible to be a good Christian without joining any particular religious body."

"I dare say you are right in your theory," observed Gerald, very gravely, "but practically, I think you would find your system very difficult to act upon."

"I find no difficulty whatever," replied Rosa, promptly.

"And are *you* then a good Christian?"

"I hope so. At least I am a Christian, and I respect good Christians of every denomination, which is more than some of your high professors do."

"What we respect, is not the great question that

must decide our eternal destiny. What we *are*, is the fact we must be tried by. You say you are a good Christian ; and if you are indeed a sincere, a practical Christian—”

“ Oh ! I do not mean that, exactly. It would be presumptuous indeed, for me to aspire to such a title. I mean that I am a believer, a nominal Christian.”

“ A believer in what ?”

“ In the excellence and purity of our holy religion.”

“ You believe in its excellence and purity, then, as something to be regarded, approved, and even admired, at a distance. Do you believe it to be essential to your happiness, that you should become religious yourself ?”

“ You ask me strange questions ;—yes—I don’t know—I have not quite made up my mind. It is a subject I have not been accustomed to think about.”

“ Oh, Rosa, it is a subject on which we must think, and think deeply, before we have any right to call ourselves Christians. I am catechizing and preaching to you as if I were your father confessor. Pardon the liberty I am using. My desire that you should be happier, and better,—that you should be as useful, and as admirable, as you are capable of being, emboldens me. Isabel, my sweet sister, will you not join your endeavours to mine ? Let us entreat *Rosa Bell* to become a real Christian before

she trusts herself, as she is about to do, alone in the world."

"You say right," exclaimed Rosa, affected with sudden emotion by the earnestness of his manner. "It is indeed to be alone in the world, to live as I shall do, after I leave the shelter of this roof."

"My dear friend," said Isabel, throwing her arms around her neck, "you shall not leave us. Father, come and help me to persuade our visitor to stay."

"Rosa," said Mr. Otway, advancing towards her, "if you had nothing to do but consult our gratification, I am sure you would not leave us; but the claims of duty must be attended to, and if these should bid us part, no one will regret the painful necessity more than myself."

The sentence he thus pronounced was delicately worded. His children thought it kind. Rosa alone felt the full import of its meaning, and she knew that her doom was sealed.

"I must leave them, then," said she, on retiring early to her own room for the purpose of indulging her melancholy reflections alone. But scarcely had she closed her door, when she was followed by a servant with a note from Mr. Otway, requesting the favour of her company in his private study.

"Perhaps I encroach upon your hours of rest?" said he, advancing kindly to meet her at the door. "I see you are not well. Another time will do,

Rosa. Retire, as you were intending, for to-night."

"To-night, if you please," said Rosa. "If you have any thing particular to say to me, I would rather hear it to-night."

"Then take this chair," said he. "It is the only comfortable one my apartment affords." And he placed her near him with a parental kindness, that made her wish more and more she had been worthy to become a member of his family.

"You will wonder," he began, "that I should have made this claim upon your attention, but your visit here, with the developement of character it has occasioned, have been of more importance to me than you can well imagine. Perhaps you are aware that I am in want of a companion for my daughter, whose health and spirits render it extremely undesirable for her to live much alone, or in society so uncongenial to her as Miss Peterson's,—worthy woman as she is. I have spent years in fruitless search of the character I want, and I can only attribute my disappointment to the fact, that the young women who generally offer themselves for what are called *situations*, are such as circumstances or in inclination induce to take upon themselves the office of educating the young, comforting the sick, or supporting the aged; from any motive rather than a sense of duty."

"In asking why certain young ladies have chosen to *go out*, the answer is seldom, 'because they are

well qualified for any situation, and likely to be particularly useful in the one selected ;' but rather, 'because their parents have failed, their patrons have died, or they are so refined and accomplished, that it is impossible for them to live at home.'

"What may be your reasons for having made this choice, it is certainly neither my business, nor my wish to inquire; but finding you unsettled, and unhappy at Mr. Vincent's, charmed with your manners and conversation, and encouraged by strong hopes, that as a pupil of Mrs. Gordon's, you might have acquired at least some of the most valuable parts of education, I conceived the idea of inviting you to become the companion of my daughter. Think, then, what must have been my disappointment, to find that the very being whose guileless temper, warm heart, and lively spirit, might have rendered her so valuable to my poor Isabel, was learned, without wisdom, and amiable without religion. I could not, after this discovery,—I say it with pain to myself, and tenderness for you,—I could not ask you even to remain with us much longer as a guest. Pardon me, dear Rosa. You understand my meaning. It is not from a want of the most affectionate regard, that I speak to you in this manner. We all love you, you are convinced that we do. And should you ever really want a home, remember that ours will be open to you, with the kindest welcome of our hearts.

"For the present,—that is, before very long, we must part; for I see, by Isabel's look and manner, she would soon resign into your hands the task of deciding for her in every case of importance, and I must have some one to guide her judgment, who feels the value of personal religion. Can you assist me? Do you know of any young person religiously brought up, whose tastes and manners would be agreeable to my daughter, and who would consent to make one of our fire-side circle."

Rosa had been seated some time with her head resting in her hand, so as to conceal the tears that fell too profusely for restraint. She was still silent, for she seemed to have no power of utterance, when suddenly a thought flashed across her mind like lightning, and she looked up, regardless of her disordered countenance, and dishevelled hair.

"Yes," said she, "I do know a young person who would exactly suit you,—my friend Alice Gordon."

"But could she be induced to come?"

"I cannot tell. I will write, if you please, and describe the situation to her. She is strongly attached to home, but they are poor, and I think she would not be unwilling to comply."

"Perhaps you would be kind enough to write to Mrs. Gordon. She was a distant relation of ———, but that is of no consequence. Say nothing about

any claims of mine, or my children's. Write simply as your own judgment dictates, and you will oblige me more than I can express."

"I will," said Rosa, "and glad indeed should I be to do anything to induce Alice to come, for she would be a blessing to you all. And since I can be of no value to you myself, I owe it in gratitude——"

Rosa would have proceeded with the warmest acknowledgments of the deep sense she entertained of the kindness and the worth of the family she was about to leave; but her former weakness overcame her, and she could only say, "Good night!" in broken accents, as she hurried from the room.

Nor did Rosa feel a moment's hesitation in offering to her friend the situation she had so much desired for herself; but she did feel, and that most keenly, how much she had lost by trifling away so many years of her life, and having despised the many advantages she might have profited by in her intercourse with the Gordons.

The letter she had promised to write was faithfully penned; and while waiting for a reply, she determined to occupy her thoughts more seriously with a subject to which she already began to attach some importance, simply because it held so high a place in the estimation of her best friends.

"I shall never be like Miss Peterson," said she, in her mental soliloquies. "If, in order to obtain favour with heaven, it is necessary to scour the

earth in search of proselytes, prescribe duties to the poor, and 'parade about in all the pomp of religious zeal, I shall most assuredly never be a saint.—No, if I must be religious, it shall be in a quiet, unobtrusive way, so that the world shall not be able to detect me as an enemy. In this manner, I can mingle occasionally with its amusements, and just throw in a gentle hint when I think my companions are going too far. I will be a Christian upon the principle of universal love too, not attaching myself to any particular sect, but admiring what is good in all,—not assuming before half mankind, that I have found out a better faith than theirs, but offering my tribute of approval to the respectability of the Established Church, to the zeal of the dissenters, and the poetical sublimity of the Roman Catholics."

Fortified by such laudable resolutions, Rosa Bell retired nightly from the society of her friends, and even bent her knee in a kind of forced and spiritless effort to pray that her resolutions might be aided by the favour of heaven, and that such good works as she expected would be the fruit of her dedication, might be the means of leading others to righteousness. Yes, she actually made this meagre offering of service, such as an earthly master would have spurned, the subject of her self-gratulation, even at the throne of mercy; for the human heart will deceive itself even in prayer, and will seek to establish its false creed before Him whose eye pene-

trates through all deceptions, and who is Himself the only true fountain of eternal light.

How inexhaustible then must be that mercy which can witness the prostration of a vain deluded creature, offering at the very throne of eternal wisdom its promise of obedience to laws of its own creation, or even to the laws of God, with such mental reservation, as shall admit of direct defiance of the spirit of those laws!—how unbounded must be the mercy that can look down upon this profanation of the privilege of prayer, without denouncing immediate vengeance against the daring offender, and turning the blessing invoked by the prayer into a curse!

How much more of faith, and hope, and humble dependence, are implied even in the simplest words of that prayer,—“Lord, teach us to pray.”—And how much more acceptable must it be in the Divine sight, to ask to have our most ordinary wants supplied by Him who dispenses all our blessings, than to solicit his to the idols of our own vanity, in pursuing an elaborate system of imaginary duty, which he has not laid down, and to which he has not promised to affix his blessing.

The answer Rosa Bell received to her letter was such as she had anticipated; for she had often heard Mrs. Gordon remark, that for young women in the middle ranks of life to be willing to leave *home* for situations which must be filled, and in

which they could be useful, was a very different thing from receiving an education for that especial purpose, and such an education as would fit them for no other.

"Alice," said the mother in her letter, "has at last consented, and I believe she would have done so sooner, had she felt more confidence in her own abilities. You know she is not accomplished, and the description you have given of the refinement and elegance of Miss Otway, leads her very properly to question her own fitness as a companion. She has, however, those more substantial qualities, which, from my knowledge of Mr. Otway, I should suppose he would value above mere accomplishments; and I can only thank him, and you, for having thought so justly of my beloved child.

"From the many conversations I have had with you, my dear Rosa, on this subject, I am rather afraid you will think I am departing from my principles, in so readily giving my sanction to my daughter's leaving home. I will, therefore, in as few words as possible, explain my views of the case, and of the system of *going out*, as it is called, in general.

"It would be hard, indeed, upon the wealthier part of the community, if they could not obtain the assistance of the young and the able for a reasonable remuneration; and it would be absurd in one, who has always been a strenuous advocate for home instruction, both amongst the high and middle

classes, to oppose this system, by objecting to the office of governesses, and companions in general. It is the number of young governesses, sent out into the world,—sent as if to rid their own families of the burden of maintaining their costly habits of indulgence and idleness at home, and sent without one qualification, except that of understanding music, drawing, and one or two languages, in addition to the grand qualification of wanting money, to which I object. If their number was reduced,—if, when assistance was wanted, diligent inquiry and liberal offers of remuneration were made, the consequence is obvious. Governesses would be raised to the respect to which they are entitled, and the motherless and homeless young girls driven to this necessity, who, above all other human beings, claim our sympathy and compassion, would find half their difficulties removed, by being admitted into the circles where their lot was cast, as valuable additions, rather than as necessary incumbrances. Nor is it the smallest of the advantages likely to result from this system, that they would be better paid; and thus, being enabled to retire upon a competency, would be preserved from the necessity of choosing between two melancholy alternatives, which frequently await them,—a marriage of heartless calculation, or a desolate and destitute old age.

“ Mr. Gordon and I agreed to keep our girls at home, because we hoped, with economy, to be able to maintain them; and, under such circumstances,

we were unwilling that they should enter the field of competition, and thus, perhaps, stand in the way of the orphan, and the really necessitous. But, though they have been educated in a manner calculated to make them useful, and perfectly happy at home, the wants of a large family are so numerous, that I own I have looked with some anxiety, for the opening of such a situation as I could conscientiously recommend to my daughter's acceptance. By your kind consideration, you have materially relieved this anxiety; and, in addition to the grateful acknowledgments of all our circle, I have only to add my daughter's request to mine, that you will not leave Rashleigh Hall until her arrival."

"Mrs. Gordon is a cold-hearted woman, after all," said Rosa, when she had read the letter; for it conveyed not to her own mind the least portion of the consolation she was in want of. She ought to have reflected, that having made no allusion in her own letter to the circumstances which induced her to leave the family of the Otways, it was a point of delicacy with Mrs. Gordon to be silent; and that the coldness of her letter might with justice be attributed to her total want of knowledge, that Rosa was offering to her friend a situation she would willingly have occupied herself.

"Mrs. Gordon accepts your proposal," said she, on finding Mr. Otway alone in his study.

"Indeed!" he replied. "It is more than I had expected. You bring me good tidings;" and he

looked more happy than Rosa had ever seen him before.

"I entirely approve of Mrs. Gordon's views," he added, after reading the letter, "and cordially second the request with which she concludes. Dear Rosa, it is principle that bids us part. Affection would keep you always here; and it is not the least of the good qualities for which we love you, that you are the friend of Mrs. Gordon's daughter."

"Alice is very different from me," said Rosa, gravely. "You will find her possessed of all that I want."

"And sometimes, perhaps, wanting what you possess," observed her friend, in his kindest manner. "Ah! Rosa, you want nothing but religion. Could I hear you say, before you leave us, that you really saw the necessity of religion for yourself, you would relieve my mind from a load of anxiety on your account. Tell me, I entreat you, have you never, in your secret meditations, felt that something still was wanting?"

"No; not the necessity of what *you* call religion. But I have prayed that I might be confirmed in the little religion I now possess."

"And how much is that? Benevolence, goodwill, I grant, you have, and, perhaps, some respect for religion in others; but indeed, my young friend, this is not sufficient."

Mr. Otway rose, as he said this, and paced, with agitated steps, to and fro in the study. Rosa had

never seen him betray so much emotion before.— His whole character seemed to be changed ; and when, leaning over the back of the chair where she was seated, he again addressed her ; the voice in which he spoke was so unlike his own, that she started, and looked up as if to see whether he was indeed the same kind friend who had taken so warm an interest in her fate.

“ Rosa,” said he ; — but he paused a moment, without being able to proceed.— “ If there is anything I can do to rouse you from this fatal delusion, I ought not to allow the weakness of my own heart to operate against the discharge of this sacred duty. You will be better able to judge of the importance I attach to your responsibility as an immortal being, when this duty has been fulfilled ; because you will then be able to form some idea of how much the effort must have cost me. Will you engage to spend to-morrow evening with me in this apartment ? The interview will probably afford you more pain than pleasure, but I could not willingly withhold from you the severest test by which I can prove the sincerity of my wishes for your eternal welfare ”

CHAPTER XII.

TRUE to her appointment, Rosa Bell entered the apartment of Mr. Otway at the hour when he was usually supposed to retire for the purpose of being alone. He was more composed than on the preceding day, but he was, if possible, more sad; and he welcomed his young friend with a voice so low and mournful, that in spite of her natural liveliness and elasticity of mind, she felt inspired with an unwonted sympathy for sorrow, with the cause of which she was yet unacquainted.

“The painful reason which induces me to make the communication you are about to hear,” said Mr. Otway, “arises out of the idea you seem to have imbibed, that a general respect for the Christian religion, without any personal participation in its faith, its promises, or its blessed influence, is sufficient for you; but there are other considerations weighing upon me beyond this, which the progress of my story will develope. If any apology be necessary for occupying so much of your atten-

tion about myself, it must be, that since no human eye can penetrate into the heart of man, this kind of communication is the only medium by which we can hope to make our own experience beneficial to others.

“ Like you, in early life, my soul was animated with what I called *noble sentiments*. I scorned deceit, loved virtue, and believed myself incapable of vice. I looked upon religion as a sort of framework, by which all valuable institutions, and even society itself, were supported and held together ; but it was only as a part of this society, as a member of the general body, that I believed I had any thing to do with it. Thus, I honoured the laws of my country, paid outward respect to the public observances of religion, and concluded that I did my duty. It is but justice to myself to say, that whether from a strictly moral education, or from a sort of natural refinement of feeling, I had little predisposition to the grosser vices of mankind, and this exemption from the temptations into which other young men of my age were falling around me, gave me a sense of security that eventually proved fatal to my peace.

“ Rosa,” said the speaker, after leaning for a moment in silence, with his hands pressed violently upon his temples, “ I am prolonging this history of myself, not because I suppose it to be a theme which can, or ought to interest you, for, alas ! it has ceased to interest even me ; and you may judge

of the ruin that has passed over those who no longer find interest in themselves.

“ You did not think, my young friend, I had been guilty of the weakness I am now exhibiting. You perhaps thought, as many besides you have done, that I was a self-possessed and, perhaps, unfeeling man. The seared forehead ceases to indicate the emotions of the mind ; but are they, for that reason, less acute, less difficult to subdue ? I do but prolong this history of myself that I may delay the moment of anguish unutterable, when I must speak of another ; but my resolution is fixed, and the sooner this duty is discharged the better.

“ In my son and daughter you behold the nearest resemblance I can imagine, to their unfortunate parents, except that Isabel is less beautiful than her mother. At a very early age we were united, under all the favourable auspices that wealth, high station, approving friends, and the most devoted attachment to each other could combine to give. We were, in our natural dispositions too, exactly suited to each other, though not alike ; for I was possessed of health, ambition, enterprise, and ardour ; she of delicacy of constitution, sensitiveness, deep thought, and pensive feeling. With these natural endowments we were capable of mutually assisting each other—of heightening the charm of life, and though we did not believe ourselves to be faultless, we each idolized the other as a pattern of perfection. We wanted nothing but religion. Nursed in the lap of indul-

gence, and in a great measure secluded from the world by our absorbing affection, as well as by the elegance of our tastes, and the refinement of our habits, we had few temptations, except to sins of omission, and especially to that deadly sin of forgetting the purposes of our creation.

“The health of Isabel’s mother requiring some change of situation or climate, we were induced to travel, and we left England with the expectation of spending many years abroad. In our native country, we had, throughout our establishment, adopted just that degree of conformity to the religious world which was calculated to make us respectable in the eyes of the common people, and decent examples to our poorer neighbours ; for I have observed, in passing through life, that few persons are willing to admit that the *poor* can do without religion ; and upon this principle we kept the Sabbath, compelled our domestics to attend some place of worship during the day, and thought that by so doing we were making laudable endeavours to promote the benefit of mankind, and the advancement of universal good. It is true there were cases in which our principles might have been suspected, even in our prosperous and contented family : but the great trial was yet to come.

“On quitting our native country, and thus passing from the wholesome restriction of our moral laws, to what appeared to us as the unbounded license of continental manners, we were at first a little

startled at the wide field of liberty we were entering ; but we soon arrived at the conclusion that English morals were *too* strict, and that the people who could live virtuously without such laws, must be of purer minds, and more elevated character than those for whom such laws were necessary.

“ At home, we should have been ashamed of neglecting the observance of the Sabbath, but here, where the neglect of the Sabbath implied no culpability, we could without scruple amuse ourselves as others did ; and from gradually yielding to the idea, that it was more meritorious to conform to the habits and customs of the country in which we lived, than to make ourselves remarkable, we gave up one scruple after another, until scarcely any bounds were left for the control of inclination.

“ Our inclinations were yet, however, untainted with the pollution of actual vice. We still loved virtue in the abstract, and still believed ourselves safe, for we knew not how much the dominion of evil was confirmed by the removal of restraint.

“ It was in the second year of our travels, that we visited Rome ; and, charmed with the society of some young artists, who, in their turn, expressed equal pleasure in being near us, we fixed our residence, for some months of the year at least, at a short distance from their ancient city.

“ Here Isabel was born, and she seems to have imbibed something of the spirit of the scene by which her birth-place was surrounded,—something

of its pensiveness, its solemnity, and its tendency to decay.

“In the society of artists to which I have alluded, there was a young Italian of uncommon genius.—Painting was not his only excellence: his poetry was captivating, and his voice the finest I ever heard. Inseparable from him, as his shadow, was the son of an English nobleman, who appeared to be travelling for his health. The Italian was an enthusiast in his profession, ardent, and volatile:—the Englishman was an enthusiast, too, but of a silent, profound, and philosophic character. Of the same nation with ourselves, and driven from his home by somewhat similar circumstances, he interested us deeply; and his conversation, whenever he did communicate his thoughts, was of that description which never fails to awaken thought in others, and produces, in those who listen, a heightened conception of their own intellectual power.

“But why prolong my story? I have said, that the mother of Isabel was like her child. It was natural that the artist should wish to make her his study;—it was natural that his friend should wish to be present; and she, who was once the most delicate and retiring of women, was prevailed upon, partly by entreaty, and partly by ridicule cast upon her English scruples, to array herself in a fanciful costume, and to sit for a heroine.

“For the first time, I then perceived, with

exquisite pain, that her acquaintance with continental manners had made a change in her habits and mode of thinking. Happy had it been, if she perceived, with equal facility, how much my feelings were altered, too; but from this time I watched her only, with a jealous scrutiny that wounded her feelings, and irritated a temper I had believed incapable of anger.

“What an unfolding of the human heart here! For three years our happiness had been without alloy, our love without a cloud to darken or an adverse breeze to ruffle it; and now, in a few short weeks, I had learned to suspect my wife of levity, and she to retort with impatience!

“There was nothing morally culpable in the painting of this picture, but I hated that other than mine should look with such unbounded admiration on the form I loved; and the Englishman stood gazing, hour after hour, until his attention sometimes raised a blush, upon which the artist would expatiate with rapture; and my uneasiness was deepened into torment.

“I would not dwell upon these scenes, from which your soul must revolt, but that I wish them to be a warning to you, never to trust to the purities and innocence of your own heart, and never to believe that even the best intentions, unsupported by religious faith, can conduct you safely through the world. To-day, unconscious of any but lawless desires, you may wash your hands of the evil that

around you ; but you know not what the next may bring forth. In one hour, how many sinful passions may be awakened, of whose existence in your own bosom you had never been aware before ! In one hour, the whole aspect of your life may be changed, the beautiful defaced, and the hideous brought to light. In one hour, the confidence of innocence, and the promise of an eternity of joy, may be exchanged for the desolation of guilt, and the misery that knows no end !

“ It is not that the guilt and its consequent misery take the date of their existence from this hour.—The principle is in your heart already, though you know it not ; and, like those who build houses and plant vineyards on the sides of a slumbering volcano, you repose in fancied security amongst plenty and loveliness, until the latent power awakes, and you behold with horror that ashes and ruin are falling upon your pleasant pictures, and desolating the paradise in which you dwell.

“ But to return to my sad story.—I would have torn my wife away from the society in which I thought she found too much enjoyment, but I discovered that my jealousy had awakened the ridicule of our companions, and I determined to defy them.

“ We stayed one year longer in the vicinity of Rome, and this year was spent by the Englishman, who was a profound scholar, and master of all the arts of insinuation, in undermining the few good principles by which my poor wife was yet defended ;

and she, who was addicted to habits of deep thinking, mingled with a morbid feeling that too often led her thoughts astray, became an easy convert to his theory of morals and philosophy. He, however, was not her professed admirer.—I sometimes even thought he treated her with contempt; but the artist was unbounded in his praises of her beauty, and would have been ever by her side, had not his devotion been divided between her and his profession. He said, she was to him like an angelic sister, and I now believe she was no more. But I did not believe it then; and one day, when his extravagant praises, accompanied, as they always were, by the silent sneer of the Englishman, had worked upon my temper until my passion knew no bounds, I provoked him to offer me a challenge, which I accepted without a moment's hesitation, caring little whether one or both of us should fall.

“We met beneath the azure calm of such a sky as Italy alone can boast; and we both cast a farewell look around us, upon the gorgeous canopy of heaven, and upon the hoary ruins amongst which we stood.

“‘I am alone in the world,’ said the artist. ‘Though so young, I have no ties of home or kindred. Nature is my mother, and the idol of my love. It may be, that I gaze upon her beauties for the last time.’”

“And so it was.

“ *His* ball passed harmlessly by; — my head was untouched: but mine,—I know not by what fatality, for in that awful moment I had no definite sense, except of the stormy passions by which my arm was nerved, — mine was destined, as if by the demon of my own breast, to destroy those beautiful eyes with which, a moment before, he had been gazing so fondly.

“ His life was at first despaired of. I felt as if I should have been but too happy to offer mine in exchange for his; for what was left to me, either in this world, or the next, but anguish and humiliation?

“ We had the sufferer conveyed to his abode in a dark unhealthy part of the city, and then, for the first time, I knew that he was poor, wholly dependent upon his profession, yet animated by a genius which had taught him to aspire to the highest distinction amongst the sons of art. He was indeed, as he had described himself, *alone*. No mother, no sister, came to watch beside his bed of suffering; but my wife, who, half distracted, attributed all the blame of what had occurred to herself, insisted upon being his nurse. The Englishman shared this tender office with her; and while I, paralyzed—struck dumb, with the enormity of my own guilt, could only ask each day if there was any hope, they beguiled him of his loneliness and pain, by anticipating every wish, and sweetening every moment with the most assiduous kindness.

“Thus, from blind confidence in the all sufficiency of my own benevolence and good feeling, I had, in the course of a few miserable months, been guilty of the most terrible excess of suspicion, jealousy, hatred, and envy. I had even been guilty of murder; for though my victim still lived, I had purposely directed against him the bolt of death, and I knew beyond a doubt, that I had already murdered the one sweet hope which had so long kept his heart alive.

“And now, I began to perceive that I was very naturally losing the affection of my wife. How should it have been otherwise, for I had deeply wronged her? Her eye never met mine. This one event, which she never mentioned in my presence, seemed to have sealed her confidence towards me for ever. When I visited the sick chamber, if I heard the voices of the three friends conversing cheerfully together, they were silent on my entrance, and then, loathing my own existence, I wandered out, and left them to enjoy their kind thoughts together.

“The life of the artist was spared, but the sentence recorded against him was, that he would never again behold the face of nature, nor lay the offerings of his genius upon the shrine of her beauty. He had looked his last upon her lovely face. He knew it was so; and with a noble forgiveness that pained me more than he could have done by the bitterest reproaches, *he* always smiled when he

knew that I stood beside his bed, and stretched out his hand to feel for the grasp of mine.

“Weeks passed away, and still my wife continued her attention without remission, though the invalid began already to grope his way into the little garden beneath his window—to sit in his favourite bower, listening to the song of the birds, and to talk cheerfully of cultivating his taste for music, in which he excelled almost as much as in painting.

“It appeared to me that the time was come for the claims of a stranger to give place to the duties of a mother, but there was no longer confidence between us on this or any other subject, and my thoughts remained untold.

“On returning one evening from a solitary walk, I surprised my wife in an agony of tears, bending over the couch of her sleeping infant. She started on seeing me, and immediately left the room, though I could hear that she returned many times to the door, as if about to enter. A message was soon after sent to me, saying that she had found the invalid worse, and intended watching by him through the night.

“Disturbed by the mystery of her behaviour, and busied in devising schemes for bringing about a better understanding in my own family, I passed the night without rest, and after rising late in the morning, I found upon my toilet a packet directed for me. It contained all the most valuable presents

I had ever made my wife, but not a line or word of explanation why they were returned.

“I hastened to the house of the Italian. He was alone, and not more ill than on the preceding day. I asked for my wife. She had not been with him since the evening. She had thrown herself upon the protection of the Englishman. They were gone, and I never saw her more.

“That I lived through the agony of that hour, I can only account for by the fact, unknown to me before, that I had ceased to love my wife with tenderness or esteem—that guilt had poisoned the source of every feeling; and thus, though passion might convulse me, sorrow could not kill. Had it been otherwise—had I loved her as in happier days, we might, ere this dreadful crisis in our fate, have mingled our tears and our penitence together, and out of the ruins of the past, have built up hope for the future.

“How affecting to me, at this tremendous epoch of my life, was the sympathy of him I had so deeply injured. He seemed to forget his own blindness in my grief, and after disclaiming all previous knowledge of the event he feelingly deplored, he never afterwards made it the subject even of the most remote allusion.

“The world was now to me a dreary void, upon which I looked without beholding one point of interest, still less of hope. My children, deserted by their unnatural mother, were all I had to live for,

besides the blind Italian, who had not refused to become an inmate of my household ; and when weary alike of every place, and anxious to escape from scenes in which I no longer found delight, I proposed return to England,—the Italian, who had attached himself fondly to my children, yielded to their caresses, and consented to be our companion still.

“ It was not, however, my wish that he should remain with them long, for I was determined they should be educated in the strictest school of English morals, and, amiable as he was, I saw many disadvantages in his association with them. I, therefore, not only settled upon him a competency for life, but proposed to him to cultivate his genius for music, and after introducing him to some of the first professors of the day, I had the satisfaction of leaving him in London, well supported by able and influential friends, and an almost unrivalled favourite with the public.

“ It was through him I obtained almost the only information that ever reached me of my lost wife. He was acquainted with her residence, and as I made him my agent in transmitting regular sums of money for her use, he communicated to me in return the melancholy history of her temporary association with the gay world, so far, at least, as a woman in her situation might be admitted to its association, her subsequent seclusion, her failing health, and finally her brokenness of heart. Until within five years of the present time I was able to

trace her melancholy history, but five years ago the Italian returned to his native country, and though previously to his departure, we placed it in the power of this miserable woman to obtain the same remittance as usual, all sums of money sent through this channel have been returned, and I have now no clue to her place of abode, no knowledge of her existence.

“But to return to my children. You now see that the root of all my afflictions, the primary cause of my departure from the paths of peace, was a blind confidence in the efficacy of virtue without religion. I had made to myself an idol of all the attributes esteemed lovely and excellent amongst mankind, but my idol had fallen from its shrine. The temple of its worship had been profaned—profaned, too, in a manner the most repulsive to my own feelings, the most at variance with the religion of my heart. Could there be a greater proof that my creed was not holy, my worship not pure, and my religion not founded upon the principles of truth? I looked into the past, and saw that in the space of a few short years I had become guilty of the breach of almost every moral law. My confidence in the purity and integrity of my own soul was wholly overthrown, and I had, therefore, nothing left to hope or trust in. If I had said, ‘I will sin no more—I will lead a different life—I will renounce the evil of my ways,’ the next moment might have proved me a liar; for the interminable chain of evil was woven in with all

my habits, and even with my secret thoughts. I now saw clearly that even had it been possible for me to have retained my innocence, I could not now, after innocence was lost, regain it. I could not obliterate the past, nor break the bondage it imposed upon the present and the future.

“ On my own account I was comparatively reckless, believing I was doomed to suffering here, and destruction hereafter; but when I looked into the young inquiring faces of my children, and read in the page of their lives the same destiny as my own, my spirit yearned to purchase for them, at any cost, an exemption from the same dark doom.

“ On returning to my native country, I had voluntarily renounced what are called the pleasures of the world—pleasures, which to me had lost their charm, and in shrinking from the society of the gay, I had also shut myself out from the grave. I had therefore no sympathy, no help from any human being, and the books I read were such as served only to beguile me of the weary hours of life, without reaching the root of my distress. Night followed night, day succeeded day, and found me the centre of an unmeasurable solitude, looking round upon a scene of desolation, in the midst of which I stood appalled at my own loneliness.

“ But was there no source of spiritual communion in which I might hope to partake? Yes. At midnight, on my knees, I found an answer to the language of prayer, wrung from me by the very anguish

of a soul that thirsted for what it found not, yet could not live without ; and while the voice of human consolation was silent—while clouds and darkness hung around me, I was visited in my despair by a light that directed me to the religion of the Bible ! Yes, to the religion I had dared to despise, I was directed as to my only guide : and to the Saviour, of whom I had read without belief, as to my only hope of pardon here, and salvation in the world to come.

“ I found too, in after-examinations of my own heart, that I had wanted nothing more than willingness to believe these truths, to have rendered them available to me before ; and such was the light now bursting upon me, that I felt it was possible even for *me* to live, and hope, again. I could live for my beloved children, and hope, both for them and for myself ; and to guard them from evil, and to implant in their tender minds, an ardent love of virtue, not the virtue of the mere moralist, but the virtue of the Christian, became the chief object of my care, the supreme purpose of my existence.

“ At first I thought that in order to accomplish this end, it would be necessary to continue my secluded and almost isolated mode of life ; but as the region of hope became wider, and as my children began to require instruction in the wisdom of the world, as well as in the knowledge of all things essential to eternal peace, my views of what was conducive to their real good, underwent consider-

able change, and after mature deliberation, I entered once more upon these my hereditary possessions, and introduced my children, so far as I could with safety, to the world—not the gay world, but that modification of it commonly called society, where they may learn so much of the habits and characters of those around them, as may stimulate to acts of usefulness and charity.

“ One cause, however, has operated more powerfully than I had anticipated, against their introduction to general society,—my dread of the mention of their mother, by those who may have some slight suspicion of her wretched fate. They are at present ignorant what that fate has been; and one reason why I the more willingly make this painful disclosure to you, is because I feel that the time is coming, when my son at least must be made acquainted with his mother’s shame. He is now old enough to bear the stroke, and will bear it, I trust, in a christian spirit, but my poor Isabel!—she must be restored to better health—to better spirits—she must lose that pale, sad look, so like her mother’s, before I can disclose the truth to her.

“ Oh! just and true is the declaration, that the sins of the fathers shall be visited upon their children! What have mine done, that they should be partakers in my anguish? And yet, the blow must fall. I can bear no longer their inquiries about my former life, and the fond yearnings of their hearts towards a mother whom they array in every virtue,

and look up to in idea with a reverence due only to the most unsullied excellence. Not that I could ever ask them to despise her. I wait for the time to come when they can pity her weakness, and condemn her errors, without abhorring her image. For this I have waited long, and my constant fear is, that some idle or inadvertent remark should awaken the horrible suspicion, before their minds are prepared to receive the truth. I have sometimes even conceived it possible, that she herself, drawn back by a love which none but a mother can know, might appear before them. I have pictured her, penitent—forsaken—starving. And though I could never meet her, such is the agony I feel at the thought of her abandonment and destitution, that I deny myself in private, as you see, all the luxuries and ornaments that wealth can purchase, and only conform in public, to the customs of the world, for the sake of avoiding a singularity which might bring upon me remarks injurious and painful to my children.

“ You will now, my young friend, understand much that must have been mysterious to you before, in the internal construction of my family. You will understand why I never could trust my son away from his father’s roof, except for the two years spent at Mr. Gordon’s, and the last two at a German college—why, I never could allow him to mix with young men of his own age and country, whose

coarse or unfeeling jests might have touched upon his mother's blighted name. You will understand why I wish my daughter to enjoy the advantage of judicious as well as tender treatment, and above all, you will understand why I would so earnestly warn you against the rocks upon which I, and one far nobler and more estimable than myself, made shipwreck of our happiness. Had I not seen you yielding to the same delusion, I should not in your presence have torn open the sealed fountains of memory, and revealed the horrors of the past. Will you regard the anguish of mind which this confession has cost me, as a pledge of my earnestness in desiring your eternal welfare?

“ My child, you are yet young, yet untainted by any deadly sin. You have not to retrace the path of thorns by which I was mercifully called back into the way of hope and peace. Pause, I beseech you, and ponder upon these things, nor let the supposed innocence of your own heart deceive you again. Believe me, the confidence which is founded upon virtue without religion, is of all delusions the most fatal. Trust not to its flattering promise, but behold it as it is, deceitful as the brightness of a morning without clouds, unsubstantial as the many-coloured arch reflected in the sky—false as the vision of distant waters in the desert, where eternal sterility awaits the traveller's approach.

“ Oh! trust it not, but turn to the fountain of

everlasting life, humbly rely upon the promises of a gracious and long-suffering God, accept the means of salvation, which he has pointed out, and renounce, as you inevitably must, in the day of temptation and distress, your own system of plausible morality, now and for ever."

CHAPTER XIII.

ROSA BELL possessed sufficient serious feeling to be deeply impressed with the communication made to her, by one who had suffered too severely from his own self-delusion, to permit her to pursue the same fatal course unwarned; but her heart was yet unconvinced that she herself could ever become liable to the actual sins into which her friend had fallen. She was, however, very much inclined to become *more* religious than she had been; and whether from the sobering tendency of this inclination, or from the deep and painful sympathy excited by the unexpected confidence of Mr. Otway, she certainly became more externally sedate, and awaited the arrival of Alice Gordon with no desire to spend the intermediate time in light or frivolous amusements.

Indeed, the mere contemplation of such a family, with feelings so exquisitely sensitive, and minds so nobly and delicately constituted as the Otways; yet, with so dense a cloud hanging over

their heads, ready to burst upon them, and spread a pall of darkness over their social hours, was of itself sufficient to depress a spirit less grateful and affectionate than Rosa's; and loath as she was to leave them, yet, as such was her fixed and irrevocable doom, she anticipated the hour of her departure with less painful apprehension, than she would have done previously to the melancholy disclosure, which revealed to her the shadows in the fair picture of domestic happiness, hitherto contemplated by her with admiration, and almost with envy.

Alice Gordon was welcomed at Rashleigh Hall with all the cordiality which her genuine goodness of heart, simplicity of manners, and real dignity of character deserved to meet, for there was a delightful harmony in her looks, her voice, her movements, and the general tone of her conversation, that betrayed more fully than the most elaborate description, to what kind and degree of consideration she was entitled.

If no one could have thought of rapturously extolling Alice Gordon, no one ever could have despised her; and if she was the last to obtrude herself upon the observer's notice, she was, after being once known, the last to be forgotten. For, without any pretension, even to the usual accomplishments of her sex, she had the delicacy and tact to enter with intense interest, and ardent sympathy, into the habits, tastes, and occupations, of those she loved; thus supplying them with a faithful and untiring

reflector, in which they could contemplate to advantage all they most delighted in and approved. The beauty of her character as a reflector, however, was this,—she rejected every base or unworthy image, and by the powerful influence of her own correct judgment, combined with a candour whose truth was only equalled by its gentleness, she was enabled to extend the sphere of her usefulness, as wide as that of her benevolence.

Rosa Bell had never felt the contrast between herself and Alice so forcibly, as during the few days they remained together at Rashleigh Hall. Rosa could command affection, but she had no *influence*. And why? She seldom acted from principle. Almost everything she said or did was the result of inclination prompted by impulse; and although her impulses were for the most part of a generous and amiable character, they were too evanescent in their nature to purchase the esteem, without which affection is of little value.

Had the temper of her mind not been naturally good, she would on the present occasion have been liable to some slight touch of envy; for it is difficult to see even our best friend assuming the place we had hoped to possess in the hearts of those we most admire, without some sense of pain; but such was the sincere affection entertained by Rosa for her friend, and such her devout admiration of her virtues, that she only embraced her the more tenderly, and committed her to the care and kindness of the

Otways, fully satisfied in her own mind, that they had done wisely in adopting Alice as one of their household, as well as in rejecting herself.

Still, it was a melancholy day on which she bade them all farewell, and when Gerald Otway told her in a voice subdued with emotion, what he most sincerely believed,—that he, for one, should never feel that Alice could supply *her* place,—she smiled through her tears, and shook her head with a look of incredulity, somewhat better supported than his flattering assertion.

With Isabel it was indeed an agony to part, for she was one of those whom the hour of separation, instead of tearing asunder the ties of affection, endears by a tenfold bond. It might be difficult to account for on philosophical principles, but certain it is, that the characters which invite us most at meeting, sometimes fail to engage our affectionate adieus,—some of whom, if we are unexpectedly told that we are to meet them on a strange journey, yet, after we have exchanged with them the wonted intercourse of mutual cordiality, we suffer to depart almost as freely as they came; while to others, about whom there hangs a coldness or gloom that chills us on the first approach, we cannot say farewell, after days or weeks of social intercourse, without an interest so deep, a sorrow so intense, that, in thought at least, we linger with them, speculating upon what may be their experience through every hour, and above all things, calculating upon

the circumstances of our next meeting, at the same time that our anticipations lose themselves in anxious forebodings that such meeting never will be ours.

Isabel Otway, the only daughter of a somewhat blighted name, was one of these characters. All she had ever said or done in the least degree unamiable, was forgotten in the contemplation of her grief; and while her languid frame bore the impress of past suffering, those who left her to her —, it might be to the doom of an early death, felt an indescribable yearning of heart to take away with them some portion of the suffering she still seemed destined to endure.

If, however, Rosa Bell had found her fortitude severely tried by the separation from Gerald and his sister, the most acute, if not the greatest trial was yet to come; and this was, to behold their father descending from the dignity of manner which constituted the most striking feature of his character, to perform all the little offices of household kindness to his departing guest, and when, for the last time, he called her his dear child, and pressed upon her forehead a parental kiss, she felt as if the world beyond his hospitable door, was a wilderness into which she was about to be sent forth without a friend.

We have before alluded to the elasticity of Rosa's spirits. Even on this occasion, as yet the most distressing of her life, it did not altogether fail

her; though no one could have yielded themselves up to more complete sadness, than that with which she drew her veil over her face, and shrunk back into the public vehicle that carried her away from the inn to which she had been accompanied by Alice Gordon, and Mr. Otway's trusty servant.

Stunned with the noise of the coach, and at first wholly absorbed in her own gloomy thoughts, Rosa felt little inclination to bestow even the least portion of attention upon any immediate object; and had not the turning over of the leaves of a book, forced by the smallness of the coach into close contact with her veil, compelled her, by its frequent recurrence, to look up, she might never have seen the handsome dark eyes that were alternately fixed upon its pages, and then *rolled* in their *fine phrenzy* upon the surrounding landscape, not without occasionally directing their poetic gaze towards her own face.

The first symptom of returning consciousness evinced by Rosa was to raise her veil. The coach was small, the air of the morning oppressive, and, besides, she wanted to look out.

"We are passing through a charming country," said the gentleman.

"Delightful!" echoed Rosa. "Pray, what river is that we see winding through the valley?"

"I scarcely know," replied her companion, "whether that lovely stream deserves the name of river. I should rather imagine it some tributary

stream, *whose waters musically flow*, until they lose themselves in wider, deeper waters, and so hurry on to mix at last with the waves of ocean."

"Well!" thought Rosa, "whom have we here? The man is reading Manfred, I see." For he had placed his book so that she might make her own observations upon it, and while she did so, his eye followed hers.

"Lord Byron is a favourite of yours, I presume, madam?"

"Unquestionably."

"And Manfred, perhaps, the effort of his genius, which you most admire?"

"I should say so, if I spoke entirely from my judgment. If I spoke from my feelings, I should say the '*Dream*.'"

"*Our life is twofold*," exclaimed her enraptured auditor. "How exquisite is the rapture of hearing a strange voice, and that voice, the sweetest in the world, pronounce the very sentiments we have cherished unparticipated for years! — It awakens what the poet so expressly describes as the '*credulous hope of mutual minds*;' for we cannot believe that this pre-existent sympathy should be doomed to expire before its harvest of felicity is reaped. You admire Moore as well as Byron?"

"Of course," replied Rosa, rather coldly; for she began to fear this poetic fever might prove a little inconvenient in its consequences.

"Ah, I understand you, perfectly," resumed her companion. "The bard of Erin has too much license in his lays. His wreath is sometimes '*sullied and soiled,*' not *by the dust of the schools,* but by the rosy wine of his own god Bacchus. I approve your taste, ma'am."

'The charms of lovely woman's mind
'Should glow with beauties more refin'd.'

Rosa was silent; for, though her companion possessed the recommendation of an extremely handsome face and figure, her ear had been offended by certain vulgarisms in his pronunciation, while her eye had detected a cotton umbrella by his side; and this, in addition to a somewhat threadbare great coat, with soiled pockets, in one of which he deposited his Manfred, tended very much to guard her against meeting his advances towards a better acquaintance, with any thing like imprudent willingness on her part.

Nor was it long that her prudence was put to the test.

"Farewell!" said her companion, in a tone of the most profound melancholy;—"A word that has been, and must be;" while, despite her indignation, he pressed her hand with a tender expression of regret, as the coach with sounded horn, and whip, and rattle, wheeled up to the door of a large inn, that stood singly by the side of the King's highway;

and, before she had time to remark upon the unwarrantable familiarity, the door of the vehicle was thrown open. The waiter who opened it smiled, with meaning in his face, and her companion, after descending quick as thought, bounded into the house, where a shout of welcome from the host and hostess, three sisters, and a bar-maid, announced the return home from London of the son and heir of an industrious family, who had long kept the *Bull Inn*.

Rosa was yet another stage from the end of her journey, and, on arriving at last at the farm of Waterton, she felt more painfully than ever, what she had so often had to regret before, that every absence seemed to diminish the external attractions of her native home.

It was now the depth of winter. The trees, which, in the summer, had kindly intervened, with their green veil, between her eyes and her father's out-buildings, were now stripped of their foliage, and the barn, the stables, the cow-house,—to say nothing of the habitations of a class of animals of still lower grade, stood revealed in all their naked repulsiveness. The garden, too, had lost its beauty; the broad green walk was saturated with a winter's rain; the elms stretched forth their bare boughs, as if in defiance of the roaring blast; pools of water stood here and there, into which the rain was falling from the eaves with trickling splash, and, worse than all, George Gordon was from home!

How could he leave at such a time? He must have known that Rosa was about to return. He had no right to be thinking of cattle at the distant markets, when she was so sadly in want of companionship at home; and, happy as Peter and Martha Bell always were to meet their lovely daughter, it was but too evident that, on this occasion, they could not receive her with the lively welcome to which she had ever been accustomed. They tried to look delighted; but Rosa was not slow to discover that her father spoke with a tone of more than wonted sadness; and Martha wanted the tact to conceal, that the plenteous board now spread before her daughter, was such as she and her husband had lately not thought it right to partake of themselves.

It is a serious and appalling sign of scanty means, when the good things to which the healthy appetite has been accustomed begin to disappear. It is not the epicure alone who feels the want of the luxuries of the table,—nor is it for the mere gratification of the palate that these are always valued. It is because they prove the plenty with which Providence has blest us; and when, one by one, they vanish from their wonted place, we feel that a different dispensation is upon us, and prepare for a season of comparative destitution,—it may be of despair; for who can tell, until the hour of trial comes, how far they have been building upon the material world as the foundation of their happiness.

The first evening of Rosa's return home was, as may reasonably be concluded, a long and heavy one. Martha Bell did all she could to enliven it, by assiduously stirring the fire; and Peter sate in his old arm chair, evidently considerably cheered by the warm glow that rewarded her continued endeavours to make every thing look pleasant. But the absence of George Gordon was severely felt by all; and when Rosa at last spoke freely of the difference his company made at home, her mother burst forth in the warmest commendations of his goodness of heart, and of the faithful and noble endeavours he had made to lighten her husband of every burden it was in his power to share.

"He has been to us both," she said, "like our own son. Always considerate, always cheerful, even when things were at the worst—reading to us through the long dull evenings, such books as we could understand; and if he would only have gone earlier to bed, and not spilled the ink upon his toilet cover, nor taken his dog up stairs into his bedroom, I don't think I should have a fault to lay to his charge."

Peter Bell smiled his cordial assent to all his wife could bring forward in favour of George Gordon; but, he added with a deep sigh, "It is a thousand pities these bad times should drive such a character as George away from his native country."

"From his native country!" exclaimed Rosa;
"Where is he going?"

“Nay, nobody knows that,” replied her father; “but go he must, unless things mend; for there is no possibility of making a living here.”

While dwelling upon the praises of their favourite, the farmer and his wife almost forgot their cares, and when the hour of rest arrived, they had talked themselves into something almost like cheerfulness. It was, however, a cheerfulness of which Rosa had not partaken, and she begged so earnestly to be left alone by the parlour fire, that they consented for this night to indulge her imprudent, and unwonted desire for solitary musing.

Let poets say what they will of the loveliness of mountain caves, and desert wastes; but there is no solitude, at the same time so peaceful, and so secure, as the sole possession of a fire-side, deserted by a family who have retired to rest.

Rosa felt this, and she let the reins of imagination loose, and opened the stores of memory, and revelled in the luxurious indulgence of melancholy thoughts; for she, with all her flippancy, could sometimes be sad, and she had lately had many serious subjects forced upon her attention.

After musing with her eyes fixed upon the fire, until her thoughts became too indefinite to afford any kind of interest, Rosa looked around upon the scene of her childhood, and reflected, not without some poignancy of feeling, upon how much had been done, and done ineffectually, to reconcile to her artificial tastes, a home which she was yet un-

e to endure. She saw, amongst other things, plain useful writing-desk, her father's present herself, which in the days of her simplicity she valued above all price; and she opened its various compartments, even to the secret drawer that used to contain all her worldly wealth, while she felt with some regret, how entirely the charm of life, its mysterious receptacles, was gone.

The drawer that formerly contained her juvenile productions in prose and verse, was now filled with specimens of farming produce, written in the bold rough hand of George Gordon; and she smiled with humble disdain, to find that he had actually taken pains to write out a list of the names of her father's cows, and that her own—yes, the name dictated by Aunt Dinah herself, was amongst them. What then was her astonishment on discovering, amongst documents of such ignoble character, a translation of an Italian sonnet, written by the same hand, with several fragments of original poetry, and amongst them these stanzas, entitled,

CREATION'S VOICE.

Behold the spring comes forth again,
Her flow'ry mantle decks the plain;
Her murmuring brooks impetuous flow,
Through verdant vales, where violets blow;
Her warbling songsters throng the grove,
And fill the air with notes of love;
While forth upon the scented breeze,
She sends her heaven-born melodies.

Listen! It is creation's voice,
And earth, and air, and sea rejoice;
Listen! The softly whispering breeze
Comes wandering through the leafy trees,
To meet the sunbeams pure and bright,
That fall in showers of golden light;
While ever with a gentle sigh,
The zephyrs breathe their ecstasy.

Behold the sea! with rippling swell,
Her careless waves in music tell
How bright the sun, how blue the sky,
How deep the wells of crystal lie!
How calmly falls the evening glow,
Upon her bosom's ebb and flow;
How, safe within that bosom's cell,
Her own eternal mysteries dwell.

Creation's universal voice
Bids earth, and air, and sea rejoice;
And answering loud, and deep, and high,
Hark! to the general symphony!
No heart is cold, no lips are mute,
Joy strikes the chords of Nature's lute;
Without one note of grief, or pain,
Or discord, in the heavenly strain.

No heart is cold! Oh answer thou,
With stately step, and godlike brow;
Hast thou not met the dawn of day,
And turn'd thy weary eyes away?
Not watch'd the glorious stars of night
Unmov'd? unconscious of delight?
If mute thy lips, proud ingrate pause,
And ask thy rebel heart the cause.

"Is it possible," exclaimed Rosa, "that George Gordon should be a poet? The lines are not so despicable as one might expect from a farmer."

And she condescended to glance over them a second time; but before she had reached the last stanza, her ear was startled by the sound of a horse advancing rapidly towards the house. In a few moments a private key was applied to the door which opened into the garden, and George Gordon stood before her, almost as much astonished as herself, at the midnight vision.

Rosa was the least delighted of the two. She was consequently the least embarrassed, and replacing the papers in the desk, she exclaimed, "My father and mother were not expecting you before to-morrow night."

"My business was all finished to-day," replied George, "and I hope I am not less welcome, for having returned earlier than was expected."

"You will be very welcome, I dare say," observed Rosa, coolly, "for Waterton is dull enough without you."

"So you have been trying to amuse yourself with looking over my accounts," said George.

"If you will bestow them where they have no right to be," replied Rosa, "you must take the consequences."

"What consequences do you threaten me with?" asked her companion.

"With a critical review of the poetical works of George Gordon, yeoman," replied Rosa, holding up the lines.

George Gordon was able to criticise his own mal-performances as a poet quite as freely and as cleverly as any one could do it for him; and he neither blushed at being detected as a poet, nor endeavoured to snatch his lines from the critic's grasp, as some would have been tempted to do, not only by the beauty of the hand in which they were held, but by the arch triumphant smile that played upon the critic's face.

What then did George Gordon do, to establish his character as a hero of romance?

He sat down by the fire, with an air of perfect indifference, and began to unbutton the leathern spatterdashes which had protected him through many a wet and wearisome ride.

"Are you not tired, George?" asked Rosa, defeated as she always was, in her attempts to disturb the equanimity of his temper.

"I have a good right to be so," he replied, "for I have ridden fifty miles in the last seven hours."

"Why did you ride so fast? You could have come half the way to-day, and half to-morrow."

"I like to sleep in my own bed," was the laconic reply; and Rosa thought he was about to take advantage of the earliest opportunity of renewing his

acquaintance with it, for he took up his candle and left the room.

It was only for the purpose of feeding his dog, and he soon returned, placed the candle upon the table, and stood for some moments in silence, with his eyes fixed intently upon Rosa.

"Rosa," said he, in his kindest, gentlest voice, "you are sitting up too late, after so long a journey."

"I am sitting up," she replied, "because I feel that I cannot sleep."

"Why can you not sleep?"

"I have many serious things to think about."

"What are they?"

"I cannot tell you all at once. But, as I always tell you everything, you may depend upon hearing what they are, some time or other."

"Do you always tell me everything, Rosa? God bless you!" and he held out his hand to say, "Good night."

Rosa could not speak. The unwonted tone of his voice had affected her, and his manner too was so much more kind and gentle than usual, that the grateful surprise occurring when her spirits were the weakest, rendered it impossible for her to articulate one word.

Rosa Bell was never so beautiful as when her countenance expressed deep feeling. The ordinary expression of her face was too lively to excite the

highest degree of interest. Her smile was too sunny, the glance of her eye too brilliant, and the flow of her natural spirits too impetuous. She was like a picture in which every combination of loveliness exists, without a sufficient proportion of shade. But now, when the shadow was upon her countenance, when the arch smile had deserted her trembling lips, and when, with her head bent down, and slightly averted, the natural curls of her dark hair fell in unchecked luxuriance over her temples, leaving the white forehead and clearly pencilled eyebrows distinctly visible, she looked so exquisitely lovely, that even the prudent, self-possessed, and resolute George Gordon, stood as if enchanted by her side, holding, yet scarcely sensible that he did so, the fair hand which remained passive in his own.

Had Rosa possessed more romance, or even more of the affectation of romance, she might have prolonged this scene; but suddenly struck with the absurdity of all pretension to tenderness under such circumstances, she smiled away her momentary emotion, and looked up with an expression of countenance that soon procured the liberation of her captive hand.

What can it be in woman's nature, that makes her so prone to trifle with the feelings, which she would yet, in her better moments, be so glad to soothe?

With a quick rebound the elasticity of Rosa's spirits returned, and the reaction produced its wonted effect,—that of repelling the friend, who above all others, would, had his will been the law of his existence, have doubled all her joys, and have rejoiced, under every affliction, to suffer in her stead.

“ You are very interesting to-night, George,” said Rosa. “ The cattle fair has transformed you into a perfect Romeo.”

“ Rosa Bell,” said George Gordon, grasping her arm, and looking sternly in her face, “ you *shall* be serious with me to-night, if it be for the last time in your life. I have a right to demand this of you.”

“ Go on,” said Rosa, still undaunted, “ I cannot refuse to oblige you in any way, if you proceed in the same polite and conciliatory manner.”

“ I would speak to you kindly, if you would let me,” said her companion, relinquishing his hold of her arm. “ I would speak to you from a heart that knows no other feeling in relation to you. Will you then tell me candidly, what are your views with respect to your future life ?”

A slight shadow once more passed over Rosa's face, as the actual dreariness of her future life presented itself to her mind. But she resumed the air of gaiety so familiar to her, and answered—“ My views of the future are, that as soon as I hear of a

good situation with a liberal salary, and little to do, I shall again engage in the delightful task of 'teaching the young idea how to shoot.'"

"I should have thought that a situation, like that to which you so kindly invited my sister Alice, would have been more congenial to your taste."

"Perhaps it would," said Rosa, again serious for a moment. "But I was not good enough to associate with the Otways."

"And do you ever, dear Rosa, intend to be better?"

"Oh! yes. I do really intend to become quite religious."

"Heaven grant you may! You will enjoy no real happiness, and confer none, until you do."

"I do not expect it; and I only console myself with thinking, that the happiness of no human being depends upon me."

"And suppose you were mistaken, Rosa—suppose there *was* one human being whose happiness depended upon you, and you alone; would you give up one pleasure, or descend one step lower in the scale of worldly advantage for his sake?"

"I cannot tell. It depends entirely upon who this imaginary being might be. If he was a farmer, and wore spatterdashes, I think it scarcely probable that I should."

"Rosa," said George Gordon, rising, and extending his hand, while his eyes flashed indignation,

and a feeling of indescribable bitterness curled his lip, as it quivered with deep and almost uncontrollable emotion :—" Rosa, good night ! I shall trouble you no more with my impertinence. Henceforth your path in life, be it social or solitary, shall not be darkened by my shadow, nor impeded by an image so degraded, and disgusting to you, as mine."

Rosa would have spoken to him more kindly, but he was gone. He had left her to the silent contemplations of her own heart, whose hidden fount of tenderness, so perversely, so cruelly repressed, at last burst forth, without an object upon which to bestow its sweetness, or expend its strength.

" I am alone !" said Rosa, " I, who of all earthly creatures, am the least calculated to bear the burden of life unaided. The good dismiss me from their presence, the kind depart and leave me. I am alone, without the power to endure the solitude to which I am consigned."

Who can experience the acute, yet undefinable sensations of which Rosa Bell had made herself the victim, and still question the dominion of evil in their own souls ? Every act of palpable criminality has its adequate inducement, and the guilty self-deceiver may persuade himself in defiance of his conscience, and of God's word, that he is tempted beyond his strength ; but in moments of social intercourse, when human weakness asks at our hands the cup of consolation—if, in such moments, from

the perverseness of a capricious temper, or the mere wantonness of selfish and inconsiderate folly, we have mingled bitterness or poison with that cup, we must ever afterwards look back to such moments, as indelible memorials of our own depravity of heart, as witnesses against us when we plume ourselves upon our good intentions, and as warnings for the future, to trust to no guide, protection, or support, that wears the stamp of human fallibility, and rests upon no firmer foundation than mere human power.

CHAPTER XIV.

WHATEVER might be the effect produced by Rosa's ill-timed levity upon the feelings of George Gordon, he suffered himself to betray no resentment, but treated her in all respects with the kind consideration of an affectionate brother. Nor could her beauty, her occasional playfulness, with some slight mixture of the art of flirtation, to which Rosa was not altogether a stranger, induce him to deviate from the line of conduct he had marked out for himself.

He did not however trust himself to her society, as he had done in former days ; but rather sought excuses for leaving home, and often spent his evenings at the parsonage, when he might have been reading to her at her father's fire side.

It is but reasonable to suppose that under such circumstances, the farmer's home should become a scene of monotonous weariness, which the spirits of Rosa, now unaided by the frequent refreshment of Alice Gordon's company, found it difficult to sus-

tain. Day after day passed over, unmarked by anything but the wonted routine of household occupations, and Rosa had begun to think the world a little negligent of her claims to its attention, when a kind letter from Mr. Otway offered to her notice a situation which in many respects he could highly recommend.

By his own acknowledgment, he could not engage this situation, even for one in whom he was deeply interested, because the lady by whose excellent qualifications it was at present so effectually supplied, refused to surrender the trust committed to her by a deceased friend, the education of whose children she had undertaken as a sacred duty, until she should become so far acquainted with her successor, as conscientiously to resign this trust into other hands.

"A second Miss Peterson!" said Rosa, contemptuously, "who runs about with tracts, and wants me to become acquainted with all the poor families upon whom I am to call for their monthly contribution to the Bible Society. Well, I will try my fortune again, and I do think I shall have a better chance this time, for I really begin to feel myself growing more serious than I used to be, and when I mix with the world again, I intend to be very scrupulous indeed."

In this disposition of mind, Rosa once more departed from her father's house, and she left it even with less of the regret ordinarily felt on taking

leave, than she had ever experienced on a similar occasion before. For this time she was not only pining after other society, and other scenes, but positively weary of her parents, and of all their kind, but ineffectual endeavours to make her happy. Nor did the tears of her mother, or the disappearance of one familiar object after another, as she passed away from her native fields, occupy more than a slight and momentary consideration in her mind.

With her father, it always cost her something like a pang to part; but he was still by her side, and would be for some hours to come; for he never allowed his daughter to leave home, without seeing her safely into the coach that conveyed her from the neighbouring market town. It is probable he might on the present occasion, have committed this duty to the hands of George Gordon, for he was not in his usual health, but George had gone from home, apparently unconscious of any time having been fixed for Rosa's departure, and she had thus lost the opportunity she secretly wished for, of bidding him a kind farewell.

As Peter Bell and his daughter, therefore, pursued their way in a neighbour's gig, along the miry roads, with a keen February blast blowing directly in their faces, accompanied by that peculiar sharpness which, especially when the mind is ill at ease, seems to be twitching for very spite at the outward man, it was not to be expected that their words

should be very frequent, or the tone of their voices particularly cheerful when they spoke.

"This is a rude blast, Rosa," said her father. "Wrap yourself closely in that cloak of yours. You don't seem made for contending with such blasts as these."

"And yet," said Rosa, "I do not think I suffer half so much as you do, with that dreadful rheumatism in your shoulder."

"Never mind my rheumatism, child; but look the other way, and take care of yourself; for you're going amongst strangers now, and may feel the want of some of your mother's cordials at night."

"But father," said Rosa, again turning her face towards him, "I want to know one thing. Is it convenient for you to spare me so much money? For I *could* do without some of it, I believe."

"Why, as to the matter of convenience, I can't say much about that; but while I have a guinea in my purse, you shall never know the want of it amongst strange people; and when I have not, we must do the best we can. So say no more about it, but cover yourself up, and be quiet."

It was in this way that Peter Bell and his wife reconciled themselves to the expense of their daughter's long and frequent journeys, against which, to have balanced the small remuneration she had received in the one situation she had filled for a few months, would have been but a mockery

of common sense. It was their principle that, come what might to them, their child should want for nothing. She had been educated for a governess, and her way to this deceitful eminence must be paid for, as it was clear that nothing else could be made of her now. Nor would it be an idle employment for those who educate their daughters for governesses, *merely* for the sake of economy, to make a calculation of the expense incurred by the travelling of such young ladies, not only from family to family, in the hope of being exactly suited, and exactly suiting in their turn ; but home at every Midsummer, sometimes hundreds of miles, and back again, with all the expensive dresses they are obliged to wear for the purpose of giving themselves gentility and importance. And then, if the parents have been so liberally minded as to have made the mere circulation of the current coin of the country the main object of their hopes, they may find, with some degree of satisfaction, that such hopes have not been defeated.

We might also add to the calculation, that frequent failing of the health of governesses, partly, it is but fair to suppose, from the confinement and sedentary habits incident to their situation ; for though they are allowed, requested, and sometimes compelled to walk daily with their pupils, how different are their movements restricted to a certain route, at a certain time of the day, with the constant dragging of weary and importunate children,

from the bounding step of her who goes forth in the fresh pure air, upon the mountains, or along the valleys, just as inclination dictates, elated with a sense of liberty, and rejoicing in the privilege of a healthy vigorous frame.

On entering the family of Mr. Stapleton, Rosa Bell was welcomed by a middle-aged lady, of the name of Morgan, and she recollected it was the same by which Mr. Otway had described the governess of whom he spoke so highly. This lady, however, was so evidently a gentlewoman,—so dignified and so important in her station at the head of the household (for Mr. Stapleton was a widower) that Rosa could scarcely believe her to hold that office, until she observed that the children appealed to her on every occasion, both as their friend and their instructress; for their father, a grave and gentlemanly man, was so reserved in his habits, that few people appealed to him from choice, though the little attention he did bestow upon his family was of an agreeable and conciliating character.

Had his residence been less delightfully situated, or his children less amiable, Rosa might have thought her new home almost too quiet, and perhaps too dull, to be endured; but the lord of the domain possessed a taste so highly cultivated, with means so ample, that not only were the grounds around his mansion highly adorned, but the interior embellished with the richest profusion of specimens

of painting, sculpture, and every other branch of the fine arts.

In his own character, he was perhaps a little too stately and aristocratic to be always a social or agreeable companion, and had it not been for the benignant influence of Miss Morgan's warm heart and pleasing manners, his home would scarcely have been so favourite a resort of the literary, the refined, the intelligent, or the curious. Such, however, was the character of the place, that visitors of distinction came and went at their own pleasure, seldom leaving the family an opportunity of saying they were alone; and by none who resided at Rashleigh Park was Miss Morgan noticed without the most respectful attention, or regarded with any other feeling, than that of the highest esteem.

Rosa Bell at first felt a little disconcerted, on finding to what an elevated station her friend Mr. Otway had recommended her; but her easy manners were a safe passport to all society, and her facility of adaptation helped her through every difficulty, even here.

We should scarcely say through *every* difficulty, for there was one which manners alone were unequal to overcome. Miss Morgan, the only friend of Mrs. Stapleton, was a sincere Christian, as well as a perfect gentlewoman. She had assumed the office of instructress to the children of the deceased, from a strong sense of duty, that would not permit

her to resign this office except to one, whom she should have reason to believe would make their moral and religious advancement her especial care. Rosa's youth was the first unfavourable circumstance which had struck the attention of this faithful friend ; but, as they spent day after day together, and she led her young companion on, to perfect confidence, which, with one so open and sincere as Rosa, was not difficult to do, she discovered with anxious solicitude, that a still greater essential than that of mature age was wanting.

" May I ask you," said she, one day as they walked together in the garden, watching the bursting forth of the bright spring flowers, " what first induced you to think of becoming a governess !"

" My object," said Rosa, " was entirely pecuniary. Was not your's the same ?"

" Indeed it was not," replied Miss Morgan, " though I had need enough to think of money, for I had no home."

" Then you escaped the pain of separation from near and dear connexions, which many, who go out as governesses, have to suffer from, so severely."

" I can scarcely call it an escape, when I had, previously to my entering upon this kind of life, to endure the breaking up of my home, and the severing of all domestic ties. My parents died within two years of each other. I had no sister, and my *only* brother went at an early age to India. The

scene of our household happiness was appropriated by strangers, and I had no where to hide my head. I was young and inexperienced then. I had been tenderly nurtured, and loved perhaps too dearly. I leave you to judge what must have been my portion of suffering. But an all-powerful arm was beneath me,—an arm upon which I had been taught to lean, and I was mercifully led from one step to another, until, by the labour of my head and hands, I obtained the countenance and protection of wealthy and influential friends, who for many years very effectually assisted me by their cordial recommendations.”

“Alas!” said Rosa, “You must have had a melancholy life!”

“No, my young friend. My life has not been melancholy. I have had my pleasures. He who appoints us all our duties, has affixed to the faithful performance of them a measure of enjoyment, such as the world can neither give nor take away. I have had my pleasures in the affection of the innocent young hearts whose early developement it has been my task to superintend. I have had my pleasures in the cordial approbation of those whom I was solicitous to serve. But, above all, I have had my pleasures in that Christian hope, of which, I bless God, I have been enabled to become an humble partaker.

“One regret, and one alone, has followed me wherever I went, and embittered the earthly portion

which, however burdensome it may be to those who do not enter upon it with right feelings, has been blessed to me. From my intimate acquaintance with the domestic affairs of numerous families, I have become painfully convinced of the wrong system upon which education is generally pursued. I have seen the young, the ignorant, and sometimes the unprincipled, rashly undertake the arduous and responsible duty of teaching, on no higher grounds than that of wanting money, and with no better qualification than that of being fatherless, or homeless, or discontented with the home they had; while the just remuneration which ought to have more fully rewarded the conscientious teacher, has thus been divided amongst an endless number of candidates, and consequently divided into sums of comparative worthlessness.

“It is a disgrace to society, in its present stage of civilization, that there is no money given so grudgingly as that which is given for plain, substantial, moral education; while all parties agree, that the act of teaching, unremittingly and faithfully performed, is the most laborious of man’s life; and it will be vain to expect the price of their labour to be raised to its just value, until more efficient labourers are brought into the field.

“And now, young friend, will you believe me, after this long lecture, when I assure you that my remarks have had no personal meaning. It is a

subject on which I have been compelled to think and feel deeply,—a subject on which, it seems to me, that long experience entitles me to speak. I have no right to interfere with, or presume upon your motives, in making choice of the occupation of a governess. I feel every disposition to judge of them favourably; but I must tell you candidly, that, though I have now, in the decline of life, the comfort of a brother's roof, with ample pecuniary means awaiting my acceptance, I am determined not to desert these motherless children, until I find a Christian teacher to whom I can conscientiously commit, not only the cultivation of their minds, but the care of their immortal souls."

Rosa was silent. Again it seemed as if her doom was sealed; for she could not, in the presence of this deeply experienced woman, lift up her voice and say, that she believed herself qualified for so sacred a trust. She promised, however, to give the subject her most serious consideration, and in the mean time she was invited to remain as a member of Mr. Stapleton's family, ostensibly on the plea of becoming better acquainted with its domestic economy, but secretly to afford Miss Morgan an opportunity of ascertaining whether she was a true Christian.

In the mean time, she became so intimately associated with this excellent woman, and was treated by her with such perfect candour, as to be able

to perceive the deep root of all her virtues,—the source which supplied, through innumerable channels, the principle of religion to all her thoughts and actions.

In the enjoyments of Christian intercourse, in the offices of charity, in the sacred duties of prayer and worship, Rosa was ever by her side; and she now saw, what she never distinctly understood before, that the highest embellishments of a cultivated mind are not incompatible with usefulness, either at home or abroad. She saw that a truly dignified and even elegant woman may deliver out tracts; that subscriptions for religious purposes may be collected without bustle or bombast; and that, so far from the graces of the mind and person being cast aside, in the eager pursuit of moral and religious good, they are capable of being enhanced in every charm, by the higher graces of the Christian character.

Happy had it been for Rosa, could she have become a partaker in this privileged life, instead of an observer only; but while she admired the character she was contemplating daily, more and more, she thought the very eminence her friend had attained in the religious world, by placing her at so wide a distance from herself, was a reason why that friend should still be admired, without any attempt at imitation.

“Impossible!” she would often say to herself, after questioning what right she had to stop at any given point of merit; “Impossible that I should

ever become a character of this description! I may be very well in my way, and I do intend to be much better than I have been ; but Miss Morgan is quite a different sort of being. There is scarcely one point of resemblance between her and me. She is a woman set apart for especial purposes. It would be strange indeed if all were like her."

And thus she glanced back into the world, and would fain have compounded for retaining a share in all its enjoyments, and just giving so much of her heart to religion, as she deemed it convenient to spare.

Nor was the world so distant, even in the privileged society of Miss Morgan, but that a few steps could place her within some of its most brilliant circles.

Mr. Stapleton was not a religious man, though for the sake of his departed wife, who before her death had become a decided Christian, he allowed, and even wished his children to be educated in the same way. He had in his own heart a great respect for religion, and instead of the many scruples of Miss Morgan degrading her in his sight, he most politely made way for the exercise of these scruples, and appeared even to reverence her the more for their influence upon her own life.

The exquisite tact with which Miss Morgan, thus delicately situated, was able to do the honours of the house to his numerous guests, and, at the same time, to protect his children from the influence

of objectionable companionship, was not the least admirable part of her character ; but Rosa could sometimes scarcely believe it was the same woman, who had collected the children and servants at the hour of family prayer, to pour forth her fervent soul in the language of devotion, who could, at another hour of the day, take her place in the drawing-room with the ease of a perfect gentlewoman, and address herself to guests whose society was sometimes most uncongenial to her mind, on subjects connected with the fine arts, literature, politics, or any of the favourite topics of the day ; yet never, on any occasion, forgetting herself so far, as to join in turning serious things to jest, or lend her sanction to remarks calculated to awaken uncharitable feelings, or lower the tone of rational conversation.

Amongst other visitors at Rashleigh Park, was a Mr. Lampton, a young gentleman of considerable importance to himself, who professed to be a great connoisseur in painting, and, in short, in every thing ; but painting and sculpture were his hobbies. His father had made an immense sum of money by commercial speculations, and the son was about to fit up a gallery of his own, at what they called their *seat*, situated within a few miles of London.

Young Lampton had been in Paris, and bought a *Guido*, of which he never failed to inform his friends ; for to him pictures were not pictures, but a *this*, or a *that*, according to the name of the

painter; and, if the truth must be told, he had perhaps, as little idea of any merit, or demerit they possessed independent of that name, as if he had seen only the reverse of the canvass upon which the colours were laid.

Of all kinds of pretension — of all descriptions of boasting about prices and pedigrees, that which relates to the nominal value of pictures, is perhaps, the least reconcilable to the uninitiated. But if it falls not without offence upon the public ear, how must it grate upon that of the artist himself; whether successful, or unsuccessful, it matters not, the gross and palpable mockery is the same. If the spirit of the painter has ever nerved his hand, or lighted up his eye, or borne him along with step elastic as the air, to climb the mountain's brow, that he might gaze upon the splendid panorama of a distant world—to stem the torrent, that he might contemplate its foam—or to gaze through a vista of sombre elms, far, far away, along the misty valley, where a silver stream was winding, and the shadows fell askance upon the verdant sward, and the smoke of the woodman's evening fire rose in a vaporous column through the clustering trees,—if he has lingered in such a scene, or on the rocky shore, beside the ocean's crested waves, when the moon was in the heavens, gazing intently upon her crescent-light surrounded by fleecy clouds of grey and silver, or upon the radiance that reposes on the bosom of the deep,—if he has

gazed thus enamoured, upon the ever-varying aspect of nature, that he might concentrate all the rays of beauty, and fix them, so as never to be eradicated from his rapt soul,—how must that soul recoil from the profanation of its idol, when the living essence of nature's loveliness becomes the subject of vain babbling, amongst those, who, with neither eye, nor heart, nor feeling for her charms, make a trade of the painter's art, and pledge down their gold in the market; for ever boasting that they possess what they are still unable to enjoy.

Rosa Bell was at first repelled by the assumptions of Mr. Lampton; but he had the art of talking so fluently, that, in time, she began to think he must know a great deal; and one day, when he condescended to remark to Miss Morgan, that his sisters were in want of a governess, she caught at the words, and determined, if she heard a good report of the family, to offer herself.

Mr. Lampton, the elder, was seldom a visitor at Rashleigh Park, because it was a place in which he could make no figure; for, proud as he was of his son's predilection for the fine arts, and anxious as he was to prove himself a gentleman by birth, as well as education, by trying to delight in all that he considered gentlemanly, he did really delight in nothing but politics. Here only he was at home; here he was himself, and that, according to his own construction of the words, meant that he was a *person* of unquestionable distinction. He had his

own system of political economy, which, above all others, was calculated to save the nation from absolute ruin and starvation. He had written to the Duke of Wellington (who that dabbles in politics has not?) and the very civil answer he had received in the handwriting of his Grace, was introduced on every possible occasion, with an expression of pleasure it was beyond his power to control.

Some people thought there was a slight anomaly in his extreme fondness for this letter, as he professed to hate the duke—to condemn and utterly despise him; but still the letter was introduced, and handed about, and then folded up with a smile of peculiar satisfaction: not because it threw any light upon the subject in question, but simply because it was written by a great man.

Nor was this the only anomaly that marked the political career of Mr. Lampton. He was a liberal in his sentiments—an advocate for the rights of man, or, in other words, for universal independence. He hated all *superiority* of rank, though he saw less objection to there being *inferior* grades in society; but when Rosa Bell heard him declaim against the pride, selfishness, and oppression of the higher classes, she thought what a condescending, kind-hearted man, *he* must be to his servants and dependants.

On this subject she had very soon an opportunity of making her own observations. Mr. Lampton, in want of a governess, or rather a companion for his

daughters, had commissioned Miss Morgan to look out for a person who would be likely to suit him; and she, without the least idea of the situation possessing any attractions for Rosa, had casually mentioned the subject before her.

Nor was it altogether as a matter of choice, that Rosa offered herself as the companion of three young ladies, whose characters were unknown to her. She did not cordially admire what she had seen of the Lamptons; but what could she do? Afraid of wearying the patience of Miss Morgan, and, above all things, dreading to return home, she at last decided upon making the experiment, for, as she candidly confessed to her friend, she had no hope of succeeding her at Rashleigh Park.

"I see with sorrow," said Miss Morgan, "that you do not enter with your whole heart into the serious considerations I have set before you, and I tell you with deep regret, that, under such circumstances, it is impossible for me to commit these dear children to your care. But do you think it possible to be happy with these Lamptons! They do not seem to me the sort of people you would like to live with."

"As to that," replied Rosa, with a look of real sadness, "I suppose I must do as well as I can. I have no choice."

"Have you no home?"

"Yes, but I cannot live there."

"I have no right to penetrate into your domestic

secrets, yet, surely it is not unkindness, nor family affection that drives you from home."

"Oh! no, it is nothing of that kind, I assure you. But still I cannot live there. If you will recommend me, I am determined to try my powers of endurance with the Lamptons."

And Rosa did try her powers of endurance to the utmost; for the Lamptons wanted nothing but a stated sum of accomplishments, and modern acquirements, and of these they had the assurance of Miss Morgan, that Rosa possessed a more than common share: they were, therefore, perfectly satisfied. The new governess was installed in office. Her chamber, her sitting-room were shown her by the housekeeper; her pupils were introduced to her by the lady's maid, and she was expected to settle down as quietly as any other piece of household furniture.

It was with fruitless endeavours that Rosa had, previously to her entering this family, attempted to obtain even the slightest knowledge of the character of Mrs. Lampton. 'Poor Mrs. Lampton!' was the answer her inquiries always received, and nobody seemed to be able to proceed one step farther.

The first sight of 'Poor Mrs. Lampton' unravelled the mystery. She had once been a pretty servant, and he who had then been her master, remained unquestionably her master still. Fond as he was of levelling *down* to his own rank, he was one of that numerous class of equalizers, who never allow of any one being levelled *up* to themselves.

and the wife whose beauty had purchased for her the unenviable distinction of being raised from his kitchen to his board, was but one of the many dependants who shrunk from his presence, and trembled at his frown.

To those who were happily free from his arbitrary rule, it might have been a source of entertainment to hear this zealous and determined patriot haranguing in defence of the liberty of the people; but to those who were *of* the people, and had the misfortune to be brought under his domination, it was any thing but entertaining to hear the perpetual rant, with which he advocated principles the most remote in their operation from his own conduct towards others.

Rosa Bell had never before been placed in any situation, where she had been treated so entirely as an inferior, and yet this distinction was one which, from the general tone of Mr. Lampton's conversation, she would least have expected in his family. Had the distance and hauteur of his manners towards herself been all she had to complain of, the grievance might have been lightly borne; but such is the influence of example over that of mere wordy declamation, that his wife, his children, and even his domestics, disregarding the *noble sentiments* they were compelled to listen to, day after day, and galled in spirit by the system of oppression under which they lived, turned round upon their inferiors as if in very spite, and vented upon them, according

to their different abilities and means of operation, the caprices, and the virulence of temper let loose to operate with fresh violence, after every moment of temporary suppression.

It was impossible for Rosa Bell to find either comfort or congeniality in such a family, and she felt, almost for the first time in her life, what it was to be really alone, in the midst of numbers,—poor and contemptible, in the midst of wealth. Yet what could she do?—To whom could she look for help? The world was beginning to assume a barrenness of aspect it had never worn in her sight before. Happy would it have been for her, had the charms, which temporal things were losing, been affixed to those of eternity. But, alas! like many other self-deceivers, she flattered herself she was becoming religious, when she was only becoming discontented with human life; and she even sought, in the performance of religious duties, relief from the weariness of talents unemployed. She thought of the beautiful example of Miss Morgan's character, and in a very private way, unknown to the family with whom she resided, she visited the poor and the needy, ministering out of her own resources more than was warranted by prudence or good sense.

Lovely, amiable, and elegant, both in her appearance and manners, it was not difficult for Rosa to win from the class of beings amongst whom her charities were dispensed, the warmest acknow-

ledgment of her virtues; and sometimes other visitors, to whom she was a stranger, struck with the gentle and condescending style of her address, would offer the tribute of their commendations, by way of encouragement, to one so young, and evidently so little accustomed to the important duties of life.

Pleased with this kind of adulation, perhaps the most dangerous of all to an unregenerate heart, Rosa took up the subject of religion as she believed quite seriously; and she, who had been accustomed so quickly to detect; and so thoroughly to despise pretension in others, became herself a pretender,—where false assumption is the least pardonable—where self-delusion is the most fatal in its consequences.

CHAPTER XV.

THE absence of temptation is of wonderful importance in establishing our self-complacency. Lonely, isolated, shut out from all communication with the gay world, as she had been accustomed to enjoy it, Rosa Bell spent weeks, and even months, under the firm conviction that she was leading a religious life; for though she was most uncongenially circumstanced, and often so destitute of comfort as to sit down in her solitude and weep for very bitterness of soul, she thought that such seasons of affliction were portions of the experience of every christian, and she indulged her grief the more in the confidence that such tears are blessed.

Regarded merely as a domestic, with an impassable barrier betwixt her and the social circle in which the Lamptons moved, she was spared many of the trials of her religious faith, which might have assailed her under more agreeable circumstances. True she was neglected, but when did virtue receive its due? She was lonely, but is not temporal

loneliness the portion of those who devote themselves to heaven? And if she was at times subject to harsh treatment, and blamed unjustly, who amongst the followers of Christ has not endured the same?

It was on returning one day from an errand of charity, that her path to the house led her through a part of the grounds, where the Misses Lampton were walking with their brother, and a few other idlers, one of whom was dressed in regimentals, and as Rosa glanced towards them, she thought she recognized his figure. Yes, he was tall, graceful, erect, the regimentals were the same, it *was* Lieutenant Frederick Fynch; and Rosa would at that moment have given almost anything she possessed, to subdue the glowing colour that tinged her cheeks, as she passed the party in a shrubby walk.

It was the custom of the Lamptons to meet their governess on such occasions, with very slight signs of recognition; but the heir of the house of Lampton, who studied pictures, was extremely fond of studying Rosa's face, and for that purpose he would sometimes pause, and compel her to answer some idle question, evidently invented for the occasion.

"Pray Miss Bell," said he, "have you the key of the shrubby gate?"

Rosa was compelled to stop. It was some time before she could find the key, for her fingers seemed to have lost the power of feeling, and she knew that Frederick Fynch, who stood close beside her, was gazing upon her, she knew also that he had heard

her name, and that he could not be mistaken as to her identity. Yet he showed no symptoms of such knowledge, but suffered her to pass on without a word.

It is almost impossible to be treated with coldness and contempt by those who have once professed to love us, without a secret pang, however worthless they may have been ; and Rosa felt this too keenly for her peace of mind. But she chid herself for the temporary weakness, and endeavoured to forget what had passed. It was indeed quite right that she should forget it. Frederick Fynch was a man of the world, a gay man unquestionably ; one with whom she could now have no sympathy, and what was a consideration of no inferior weight, he was a *contemptible* man, ignorant, self-sufficient, unworthy of a moment's thought. And she mentally heaped abuses upon him, until in danger of forgetting that charity formed an essential part of the religion she was professing.

Had the young governess been disposed to question the validity of her present religious propensities (for it is difficult to describe them by any other name) she might have discovered alarming proof of the shallowness of their foundation, in the consideration that a very inferior portion of her Christian zeal was bestowed upon the improvement of her pupils. In fact they did not *interest* her, they did not value her pretensions, or esteem her the more highly for her professions ; and therefore

she very gladly dismissed them after the usual routine of their daily tasks had been gone through, and betook herself to the cottages of the poor, or to her own lonely chamber, where she spent her leisure time in reading books of a sentimentally devotional character, and in writing long letters to Alice Gordon, who was the confidant of her trials, but not always the consoler of her griefs. For Alice had known a deeper experience than her friend's, and she was fully aware of the possibility of being religiously *disposed*, without the strength of principle that is necessary for a safeguard in the hour of temptation.

The stay of Frederick Fynch under the roof of Mr. Lampton was prolonged, much to Rosa's annoyance, beyond the term of expectation; but as there existed on each side the same disinclination to renew their acquaintance, all danger of personal intercourse was easily avoided.

It did sometimes occur to Rosa, when she glanced over the blinds of the school-room window, and saw the young soldier sauntering through the shrubbery-walk alone, that he must be extremely partial to that part of the grounds; and it is quite probable that certain pertinent conclusions passed across her mind, not unmixed with a sense of satisfaction in the thought, that he might be meeting with disappointment, where he had hoped to meet with her. But these reflections found no voice, and she turned back to the wearisome tasks of her pupils,

determined that if Frederick Fynch remained for twelve months beneath the same roof, she would not acknowledge her consciousness of his presence.

Fortified with this determination, she had heard without regret, that his departure was fixed for the following morning, and late in the evening she sat alone in the apartment appropriated to her use, alternately turning over the leaves of a religious romance, and pausing to wonder, by what mental process, some men were enabled so entirely to forget the past.

The evening had been employed in these unprofitable musings, and she had laid aside the novel, and taken up a volume of more serious character preparatory to retiring for the night, when a gentle tap at the door disturbed her meditations; and before she had time to speak, the tall figure of Frederick Fynch presented itself, with apparent confidence in being more than welcome.

"My dear Miss Bell," were the first words he uttered; "I have been dying for this hour."

"For what hour?" said Rosa, coldly.

"For the hour when I might speak to you alone."

"You can have nothing to say to me alone, sir," replied Rosa, "which I would not rather hear in company, and if you propose making any particular communication now, I will ring the bell, in order that Mrs. Johnson, the housekeeper, may favor us with her presence."

"Not for worlds!" exclaimed the hero, seizing the hand she had extended towards the bell. "I have staid here a whole week in the hope of seeing you alone. I have traced the grounds, and trampled down the walk, and wearied out the gardener's patience, in the hope of meeting with you alone; and now that this happiness is mine, you would call in the old housekeeper to rob me of my pleasure. But it is just like one of your mischievous tricks. You are always more charming in your provocations, than others when they try to please."

"Sir," said Rosa, and there was a slight prognostication of a smile upon her lips. "This whole week has been spent with the knowledge of my being beneath the same roof with yourself: what you now wish to say must be trifling indeed, if it was not worth the trouble of asking for me."

"Ah! my dear creature," replied the soldier, "you do injustice to my feelings. Much as I wished to see you (and he pledged himself with up-turned eyes, that this wish had been ardent as it was sincere,) you must understand, that as I am circumstanced with this family, I could not in my own person, ask to speak with the *governess*."

"Sir," said Rosa, again, and never did a face bear less approximation to a smile, than hers at that moment. "This apartment is appropriated exclusively to the use of the *governess*. The little time she has to spare is too valuable to be wasted,

and she has a right in this place, and especially at this hour, to protect herself from intrusion."

With these words, she rang the bell violently, and the domestic whose place it was to attend every summons from the school-room, arrived just in time to close the door upon the departing steps of Lieutenant Frederick Fynch.

When the human mind has once become the victim of self-delusion, with regard to subjects of a religious nature, it finds food for its complacency in almost every circumstance that occurs; and Rosa Bell looked back to this interview with her quondam admirer with peculiar satisfaction, as affording proof that she had maintained her principles, stood her ground, and given a signal instance of the efficacy of those principles, in repelling the advances of a man of worthless character. She forgot to take into the account, that the man had made himself odious in her eyes, by insulting her vanity, and wounding her self-love, and that *he* had consequently lost the power to tempt her into indiscretion. She forgot, indeed, in the fancied security of her own heart, many things she ought to have remembered; for she was yet untaught in the school of experience, and often as she had been warned by the voice of friendship, she would pursue her own course, reap her own harvest, and drink of the cup of her own choosing, whether the draught should be sweet or bitter.

With all Rosa's desire to oppose the strength of

her principles, against the multiplied difficulties and perplexities of her present situation, her fortitude at length gave way; and the long pent-up feelings of disappointment and vexation, with which she had endured this cheerless portion of her life, burst forth at last in a long letter to her friend, Alice Gordon; and so genuine was her distress, so touching her allusions to her situation, that her friends at Rashleigh, ever solicitous for her happiness, determined, if possible, to rescue her from a fate so uncongenial to the nature of her mind and disposition.

Their kind endeavours were not without success. Rosa was paid the stated sum for which her services had been engaged, and without a tear from any eye, or a single regret awakened by her prompt departure, she bade adieu to the family of the Lamptons, amongst whom she had remained a perfect stranger, as regards all interchange of thought, and with whom she had deeply felt the disadvantage of being in a state of utter incapability of loving, or being beloved.

Rosa's next translation was to the summer residence of Sir James Stanley and his amiable lady, where her office was to attend to the instruction of their lovely children, but just emancipated from the nursery.

Her first introduction to this intelligent and interesting family, was one peculiarly calculated to obliterate the painful remembrance of the past,

by establishing the conviction, that a governess *may* be regarded with consideration, and even with tenderness. She was received by Lady Stanley on the footing of a friend, introduced to her guests, and invited to join her own family circle, whenever the duties of the school-room did not demand her attention.

“ Now,” thought Rosa, “ I have at last found a haven of rest. Surely this is the reward of my religious zeal. I will persevere in the good way I have chosen ; and here,” she concluded, “ I shall enjoy every advantage.” For though the family of Sir James were not professedly religious, they had good feeling and delicacy enough to respect the religious scruples of others, and every indulgence was allowed to Rosa in the exercise of her peculiarities, her charities, and her devotions.

“ Here, then, at last, I am happy,” said she, in writing to Alice Gordon ; “ and I have to thank you, and the kind friends around you, for all that I enjoy. It is true, I am often weary of the labour of teaching, but I get through the stated hours as well as I can, and hasten to the drawing-room, where I am always treated with respect and consideration, not only by Sir James and his lovely wife, but by the guests who assemble there. Some of these, with their uniformly agreeable behaviour towards myself, I should like to describe ; but I will confine my remarks, for the present, to one who occasionally forms an exception to the uni-

formity of this rule. The lady's name is Arabella Falkner, a name you have probably heard my father mention, as that of his young *landlady*, a title which I should not suspect her of being very solicitous to maintain. The fact is, she is the only child of my father's late landlord, who died in India, after he had sent her over to complete her education in this country.

“ Miss Falkner is about my own age, the inheritor of immense possessions; and though decidedly plain, both elegant and pleasing in her manners—so much so, that, without any apparent effort, she always monopolizes the attention of the gentlemen, which is the more surprising, as the fact of her having been engaged, at a very early age, to a cousin of her own name is universally known.

“ This cousin I have not yet seen; but she talks about him perpetually. Indeed she is one of those privileged women, who can talk about anything with a grace,—she has so sweet a voice, with a gift of utterance at the same time so musical and fluent, that though there is an elegance, bordering upon splendour in her dress, her air, and in her general deportment, you would think sometimes, when listening to her, that you heard the language of a child, spoken from the fulness and the simplicity of its own pure heart. When I tell you, that every one speaks of her as ‘ the most amiable creature in the world,’ you will understand that she is not clever; but I must in justice add, that she is also

without pretension to cleverness. She is good-natured to excess, but most provokingly inactive; and between ourselves (I whisper it in your ear, for it would be high-treason to speak against her in this house), she is provoking in many ways, though I cannot precisely tell you how.

“ I think if I were to describe exactly how the case stands between Arabella Falkner and myself; I should say, that of all the individuals who meet at Weston, we are the least congenial, and the farthest from any approach towards friendship. Yet, I know not how it is, but to me it seems as if we almost always happened to be seated together. Whenever this is the case, I feel myself stiff and constrained, appearing to the greatest possible disadvantage; while the graceful Arabella, reclines in her chair, or upon her couch, in all the luxurious indolence of eastern magnificence, looking as if nature had entitled her to command the devoted services of every one around her—a right which she exercises to its full extent upon every one but me; and much as I should dislike to be beckoned to her, and then sent away again on some trifling errand, as I see others so well pleased to be, I own I sometimes feel a little piqued at being made the only exception to the absolute rule by which she governs.

“ Now I feel assured, my dear Alice, you will suspect me of harbouring an unchristian antipathy towards this individual: but, indeed, I am incapable of such a feeling. Arabella Falkner is, besides,

so perfectly indifferent to me, that I doubt whether she could, by any insult on her part, rouse me into positive dislike of her person. I only wish she would think proper to go away ; but I find, to my chagrin, that she is likely to stay many months, and that Weston will probably be her home, until the celebration of her marriage. This arrangement is probably owing to the circumstance of her being an orphan, under the guardianship of Sir James Stanley, whose lady was a Falkner, and sister to this wonderful cousin, upon whom I speculate so often as to what he will prove to be ; for to hear Arabella describe him, you would expect to see a perfect Apollo. Indeed, almost the only thing I like about her, is the faithful and ingenuous manner in which she dwells upon his merits, suffering no one to be placed in comparison with him, either for beauty of person, elegance of manners, or perfection of mind. Yet, even this partiality I sometimes attribute to her selfishness ; for, it seems, Falkner does everything for her, from the management of her estates, to the tying of her sandals.

“ It was but the other day, when looking over my album, her attention rested for a moment upon that excellent likeness of your brother George, which I copied while at Rashleigh ; and when Lady Stanley had expatiated with great admiration upon the beauty and intelligence of the countenance, she carelessly threw it aside, remarking coldly, it was not half so handsome as Falkner ; for though it

might be as intelligent, it wanted his noble aristocratic air. She then leaned back on the sofa, yawned, asked what was the day of the month, and said she would thank any of the company to tell her how many weeks would elapse before the twenty-fifth, the date of Falkner's expected arrival. Now, Alice, would not *you*, with all your Christian philanthropy, dislike this woman?"

The reader will probably be aware that the writer of such a letter as this, could not be standing on particularly safe ground. The commencement of hatred is sometimes as insidious as that of love, and though we will trust that Rosa Bell was incapable of any excess of the malignant passions, she was not protected from the attacks of envy, the bitterest, and deadliest of them all.

There was something in the fashionable ease, and graceful superiority of Arabella Falkner, that, while she herself was unconscious of the cause, destroyed her equanimity of mind; and when she compared the rank and affluence of this lady, with her own low parentage, and humble means of existence, her very soul revolted from the necessity which doomed her to a life of humble toil.

How could it be, that in her present situation, where she was treated with more respect and kindness than she had almost ever been before, she felt the degradation of being a governess so much more deeply? She thought sometimes it was because the eyes of Arabella Falkner seemed always to

follow her to the door, when in her official capacity she left the drawing-room to attend to the studies of her pupils. What ever it might be, this single-hearted, amiable, but somewhat spoiled child of fortune, became the bane of her peace. Yet with an inconsistency which often marks the state of that mind where seeming good holds a transient mastery over real evil, at the same time that she believed herself indifferent about the object of her secret antipathy, and wholly regardless of her concerns, and the objects of her life, she waited for the arrival of the betrothed lover, with an interest almost as absorbing as that of the lady herself. Not, let us hope, with the most distant desire of appropriating his attentions, but simply with a natural curiosity to see whether he was indeed all that his partial cousin had represented him.

Nor was it long before Rosa was gratified in a manner wholly unlooked for by her. Walking alone one day, along a path which led from the public road, through a private part of the grounds towards the house, she was met by a gentleman, who eagerly enquired the way. She civilly pointed it out to him, but he seemed as if he could not understand, for he was in that disagreeable predicament usually described by a man's having '*lost himself*,' when he ceases to perceive the bearings even of the most familiar places, and cannot, though he gladly would, behold the

opening through the trees, or through the fence, which his director is carefully pointing out.

"I will go with you," Rosa said at last, "as far as the turn in the wood."

"By no means," replied her companion; "I shall find my way somehow or other. And if not, I shall only be properly punished for indulging a romantic wish to approach the house *incog*. Whatever my fate may be, I am now too late to prevent my horse being led up the public road without its rider, and the consequent screams of the ladies, on concluding that I am left at the nearest inn, with at least a broken neck."

"Let us hope the ladies will not be quite so much agitated as you apprehend," said Rosa, somewhat sarcastically; for she had begun to suspect who her companion was; and what was very surprising to herself, she had also begun to think that Arabella had not been far wrong, in saying, that George Gordon was not half so handsome as her cousin Falkner. Theirs was, however, a different style of beauty, which admitted of no sort of competition. Falkner's complexion was brilliant as the morning. His light hair, tinged with auburn, curled wildly around a high fair forehead, and his eyes of hazel, beamed from beneath with a brightness too dazzling to be met with anything like steady observation. Thus his whole countenance seemed to flash upon the sight; and if there were defects in the

symmetry of his features, few were able to speak decidedly to the fact. His figure was tall and commanding, his movements free and agile, as if he was fitted alike for the mountain chase or the midnight dance, the court or the tented field.

"I believe," said Rosa, as they walked on together (for he had merely *protested* against her returning with him), "it is to Mr. Charles Falkner that I have the honour of speaking."

The gentleman bowed.

"Then I claim the right," she continued, "to guide as well as direct you ; for, I know, there are, anxious eyes watching for your arrival."

Charles Falkner said all that was civil, complimentary, and proper to be said on such an occasion ; and they proceeded on their way, not quite so rapidly, however, as the inmates of the mansion, had their figures been distinguishable from the windows, would have thought they might.

It was a great point with Falkner to find out who the beautiful young lady could be, whose attentions to himself had been so frankly and kindly offered. She must, he thought, be a visitor at Weston ; but why then walk alone at such an hour ? She was too pretty to walk alone. He wished Arabella was half as pretty ; and he looked again, each time with fresh admiration, and tried by many circuitous ways to elicit a confession of her name. And all the while Rosa's proud spirit shrank within her, and she felt as if the very

ground would open and receive her to its earthy depths, if she revealed her real character.

At last the cruel question passed his lips, delicately, but decidedly worded.

"Now for my principles," thought Rosa. "What are they worth, if they will not stand this test. One effort, and all will be over."

"I am the governess at Weston," said she, with quivering lips, and her cheek grew pale as she spoke.

"You are jesting with me," said her companion. "You do not teach the little Stanleys."

"I do," replied Rosa, gaining courage.

"Ah! I understand how it is. You are an intimate friend of Lady Stanley's, and teach her children from pure philanthropy."

"No," said Rosa; for the difficulty was now overcome, and she spoke with her own natural frankness, by which she seldom failed to excite the interest of her hearers; "I teach them on the common terms of a governess."

"Impossible!"

"It is but too true."

"You do not like the task, then?"

"How should I?"

"Then why do you undertake it?"

"Because I am poor."

"You astonish me. You have riches in yourself. Your beauty is a mine of wealth."

"But I cannot live upon beauty. Even were my

portion doubled, it would not afford me either food or shelter."

"True; but are there no other ways of obtaining both? You might write."

"I have not the talent."

"I assure you it requires no talent to write in the most popular style."

"What does it require, then? Perhaps you will be kind enough to give me a lesson on the art, and thus help me to a fortune."

"I shall be most happy to do both. You will of course write a novel; and, as the title will be the thing to make it sell, or not sell, you must look well to that. So far as I can learn, the art of constructing titles consists in their being wholly unproductive of any definite idea, and at the same time composed of two, three, or as many words as you please, beginning with the same letter, such as 'The Fable of Falsehood,' 'Peter Popple, of Poppleton Park,' and so on,—the former announcing sentiment, the latter wit. With your hero and heroine, you may do just as you please. One thing only is essential to the interior of your book,—it must contain a *witch*. No matter whether she is introduced to the reader as seated on a rock by the way-side, or inhabiting a cave, a mud cottage, or a ruined tower that overlooks the sea; she is, under all circumstances, identically the same creature, and the receipt I am about to give, will answer your purpose for twenty stories as well as one.

"Your witch must have arrived at the appearance of extreme old age, through suffering and sinful passions, rather than the lapse of time. Her complexion must be livid, her eye sunken, grey, and fiery, her cheeks hollow, and her grizzly hair woven in knotted bands around her bloodless temples. She must live amongst owls and bats, with a fox at her feet, and a serpent coiled under the stool on which she sits. On first introducing your hero and heroine to her notice, (for, of course, they go to consult her about their future destiny,) she must be muttering incantations over a cauldron that bubbles on the fire; but, after a few questions addressed to her by the trembling couple, and a few evil-boding answers on her part, she must sit down upon her stool, groan heavily, beat her withered breast with her bony hands, and then, in broken accents, tell of the blighted loves of her early youth.

"This is my infallible prescription for a novel.—Abide by my directions, and you cannot do wrong. Your fortune will be made in six months."

"Thank you," said Rosa, not a little delighted with the ease and gaiety of her companion; for two more congenial spirits could scarcely have been found, than that of Charles Falkner, and her own; and as they sauntered on, amusing themselves with many other jests equally piquant, and apropos to the occasion, Rosa could not help mentally asking in mute astonishment,—*"Is this the man who*

returns, after an absence of six months, to the betrothed of his heart?"

The answer was such as startled her ; and, struck at last with a sense of his want, either of faith, or of feeling, she led him to the house, and ushered him into an apartment, where a welcome, as cordial as it was untainted by suspicion, awaited his arrival.

CHAPTER XVI.

FROM this time, the life of Rosa Bell appeared to assume a new character. All was rejoicing, animation, and festivity at Weston; and she became one of the gayest of the gay. It is true, she made a transient effort to maintain her principles; but the very first conversation she held with Charles Falkner, on the subject of religion, had the effect of convincing her of the expediency of keeping those principles in the back ground, and not obtruding them where they might not be valued or approved.

Her musical powers were much celebrated, and Falkner had asked her to sing.

"I sing nothing but sacred music now," replied Rosa, very gravely.

Her companion smiled, and Rosa asked him why.

"Because," was the reply, "you are too pretty, I am sure, to be a nun;" and almost involuntarily she played the air, and sung the words of this song, looking all the while as bewitching as possible.

"I am doing very wrong," said she, assuming her former gravity, as soon as the song was ended.

"Impossible!" said Falkner. "You cannot be so absurd, as to pretend you are a saint."

"A saint? Oh, no!" exclaimed Rosa; "but I do hope I am endeavouring to give up the world."

Falkner laughed aloud. "Come, come," said he, "play me this little Italian air. Arabella always murders it; but still she plays on, good creature as she is."

Rosa played, and sung in her very best style, and Falkner was enchanted. What was the stimulus that nerved her hand, and gave energy to her voice, it is unnecessary farther to describe.

It was not by the mere singing of this air, that Rosa did indeed sacrifice her principles, and betray the latent feeling of her heart; it was the *spirit* in which it was sung, that seemed at once to throw her off from the ground she had been standing upon in the religious world. Had her foundation been more stable, or her footing more sure, she might have recovered her place after this temporary fall; but hers was a self-assumed religion, unaccompanied by any material change of heart, and the restraints it had imposed were consequently as irksome as they were unavailing. It could not be expected that a spirit light and buoyant, as that of the young governess, would be loth to lay hold of the first plea for throwing them aside altogether.

"This strictness of life is all a delusion," she

already began to say to herself, on returning to her own chamber. "I do not see but those who make no pretension to religion, are just as amiable, and as happy, as those who do. At least the family in which I live, exhibit a striking proof, that the love of virtue, for its own sake, is a sufficient protection against vice. Mr. Otway," she continued, after thinking awhile, "was a melancholy instance of false dependence upon the purity of his own heart; but then *his* heart was not really pure, though he had thought it so. It had, unquestionably, harboured in secret many sinful passions, of which I am wholly incapable, and have never yet perceived the slightest symptom in myself. It is a great weakness in me to be so easily guided as I am by the sentiments of those around me. Mr. Otway is a very good man—a very excellent and admirable man, now; but there is no reason why the same process should be required to make any one else as excellent as he is."

Confused, and bewildered by such meditations, Rosa Bell soon ceased to look with sincerity into her own heart, and then she ceased to pray; for it is scarcely possible to offer up our petitions to an all-seeing God, without a willingness, either imaginary or real, to subject our hearts to his inspection, in order that the process of healing may be carried on, and that of purification be rendered complete. And though the outward character of Rosa remained the same, except for the giving up of a

few scruples, and self-appointed duties, she was secretly relinquishing every shield of safety, and thus voluntarily exposing herself to the danger of every temptation. Secure in the fancied absence of all sinful propensities, temptation presented no dangers to her; and never is the soul in greater peril from without, than when unconscious of its own internal foes.

The few grave thoughts, and serious impressions, which Rosa had imbibed in different society, now vanished like the early dew; while gay, flippant, volatile, and surrounded by countless allurements to pleasure, she became daily more averse to the practical duties of life. Those of the school-room especially were of a character not to be endured with patience; and had not Lady Stanley been a woman of easy temper, and indolent habits, quite satisfied if her children were happy and not vulgar, an inquiry might have been instituted into their mental progress, not of the most satisfactory nature to their governess. This inquiry, however, was one of the last things Lady Stanley would have thought of. Rosa Bell continued to withdraw with the children at regular hours. The children themselves were so easy and healthy, so full of glee, and so fond of their governess, who on her part was so good-humoured, so lady-like, and so great a favourite with the whole family, that Lady Stanley looked with infinite satisfaction upon her own domestic arrangements, and resigned herself, with her

wanted indifference about the future, to the enjoyments of the present hour.

The most painful idea that ever presented itself to the mind of Rosa, at this period of her life, was the state of her home, and the character of her parents. She would gladly have forgotten both; and when Falkner, in speaking to Sir James on business connected with the extensive landed property of which he was soon to become the lawful proprietor, occasionally mentioned Waterton, a sensation shot through her nerves, as if it had been a disgrace of the deepest dye to be the daughter of his tenant Peter Bell.

No question relating to her parentage, or native place, had hitherto been addressed to Rosa. Bell was a common name, without locality, and the subject of her home connexions was scrupulously avoided by her. She was, in short, placed on a totally different footing with the Stanleys, from what she had been before; and whether she did altogether enjoy her elevation, was a question of doubtful solution. Still it was far from her wish to make a voluntary resignation of her claims to worldly distinction, and few circumstances occurred to her of a nature likely to produce so undesirable a result.

There were a few, however, and amongst them it was not the least alarming, to be told one day that a person in the housekeeper's room wished to speak with Miss Bell.

She was seated at the drawing-room window when this announcement was made, teaching Falkner and Arabella how to make a sketch of the boat-house, upon the side of the lake or sheet of water bounding the green lawn ; and while Arabella indolently waited for Falkner to direct her hand, and finish every stroke, he, in his turn, with an incompetency more assumed than real, appealed to Rosa for the same assistance from her.

It was one of these moments of transient enjoyment, in which, if the presence of good is unsought, evil is either absent or forgotten ; and Rosa delighted with her task, and not unconscious of the triumph of beauty over wealth, wore that dazzling look of happiness, which is, alas ! too bright to last.

“ A person in the housekeeper’s room,” was a second time announced ; and every one knows that when a gentleman’s servant speaks of a *person*, he means to designate the sort of being to whom no higher place than the housekeeper’s room could with propriety be assigned.

Rosa went reluctantly, expecting to see a poor widow, whom she had a month ago consoled with the promise, that she would assist her in obtaining a subscription for the purpose of liberating her son from prison ; but which promise, subscription, son, and widow, had unfortunately been altogether forgotten until this moment.

It was not the widow, however, but George Gordon, who, dressed in riding coat and boots, with hat in hand, advanced towards Rosa, extending that which remained at liberty, to meet—not the cordial grasp of hers, but the forced recognition of one, who, it was evident, had no welcome to offer.

The word *person*, the riding coat, the boots, the housekeeper's room, and the housekeeper herself, as she sat quilling the border of a cap, were the first ideas that crowded upon Rosa's mind; and they came together with such overwhelming confusion, that, to do her justice, we must say it was embarrassment, rather than intentional unkindness, that made her receive her old friend as she did.

The housekeeper finding there was more intimacy between the parties than she had at first supposed, had the good feeling to leave the room, and then Rosa spoke more freely.

George had told her abruptly, and without presuming upon any particular interest being attached to the intelligence, that he was about to leave England, and had come to say good-bye before his departure; but Rosa did not seem to have understood him, for her countenance underwent no change, unless it was a slight indication of surprise, such as might have followed the information of her father's horse, old Gaffer Grey, being about to be shipped for Russia. "And where are you going, George?"—"When do you sail?" with a long list

of extemporaneous questions following each other too rapidly to admit of any distinct reply, burst from Rosa's lips.

Her friend—the friend of her early youth, fixed upon her face the deep searching look, which had been wont to read her soul, and which now seemed to say, “Is it, indeed so with you, Rosa? Have you already become so heartless, as to suffer me to leave you thus, and for ever?” But he was silent, and perhaps his thoughts did her injustice; for women, in moments of confusion and embarrassment, sometimes talk lightly and flippantly, when they do not feel so.

“Farewell to you, Rosa,” said George, as soon as she was silent. “Farewell! I shall sail for America on the fifteenth. God bless you! and make you even happier than you are.”

“Farewell, George,” said Rosa, and he had turned to depart, when she called him back.

“Well, Rosa, what have you to say?” he asked, for her face was averted, and she did not speak.

“Nothing, George,” said she, at last, with quivering lips; “only I wish, when you return to Waterton, you would send me my Tasso. I want it very much.”

“I will,” said George Gordon, while a deep flush of indignation passed over his countenance; and bowing very respectfully, he left the room.

Rosa gazed for one moment at the closed door,

thinking he would surely come back ; but he was gone, and she retired to her own chamber, with a letter in her hand, which he had given her from his sister Alice, and which she wanted resolution to read.

Alice and Rosa had written very seldom to each other lately. This letter was like a newspaper in dimensions, and Rosa's conscience told her it *might* contain what would be neither flattering nor agreeable to herself. She could not, however, return to her friends in the drawing-room until it had been read, and she broke the seal with such an aching at her heart, as she had never felt before in her whole life.

The first words were kind as ever.

" Bless you, my sweet Alice !" exclaimed Rosa ; for at that moment she could ill have brooked unkindness. " Perhaps," she continued, " the letter will tell me more about poor George ;" and she then bethought her of a window that looked into the court-yard, from which it was possible she might ascertain whether he was really gone.

There was no sound or stir in the court-yard, except that a groom turned leisurely into the stable, but she saw a horseman whom she knew to be George Gordon, riding at a brisk pace down the avenue ; she saw too that he never looked back nor paused at the turn of the road where he vanished from her view ; and she returned to her own

chamber to find with some chagrin, that the letter from her friend was almost wholly occupied with a subject foreign to the present state of her mind.

"I have been," said her correspondent, "almost entirely absorbed by one train of thought since I last wrote to you, and as I know you feel a warm interest in this amiable family, I will give, as circumstantially as I can, a full and true account of what has lately awakened in my mind suspicions which I cannot lull to rest.

"My brother will have told you of Isabel Otway's declining health. Notwithstanding all the solicitude and care of the tenderest of parents, the advice of the best physicians, and all the means that wealth can minister, she has become, I fear, decidedly consumptive. She tells me she had in early life a presentiment that she should die young, and like most of those who possess her romantic turn of mind, she places such implicit faith in these presentiments, as may not unreasonably be supposed to accelerate the end to which they refer. Had her health been more vigorous, I should have found my duties here comparatively easy. As it is, I feel the want of all *your* liveliness, versatility, and wit, in addition to my own perseverance and gravity. Do not however suppose that I feel any of these duties, or even the whole of them, a hardship. I am happier than I have ever been before, because I believe I am more useful, and the love I feel for every member of this family binds me to them with

a tenfold interest. My chief, indeed my only difficulty, is how to rouse this sweet girl from the melancholy indolence of mind into which she is constantly falling. Miss Peterson would drag her about to all the scenes of poverty and distress which this neighbourhood affords, but I find it more beneficial to engage her participation in the enjoyments of others, than to confine her sympathy exclusively to their sufferings. Gerald is a great help to me. His liveliness almost supplies the want of yours. But I must return to the subject which has, I dare say, already excited your curiosity, for if I begin with the praises of Gerald, I shall fill my letter, in the vain hope of doing justice to his kindness, his talents, and the goodness of his heart.

“Miss Peterson having described to me the situation of a poor woman in an adjoining village, who, suffering from illness, was yet so destitute of friends that she seemed to belong to nobody, and thus had become the subject of curious inquiry amongst her neighbours, I one day extended my walk to the cottage where she lived as a lodger, and asked of the woman of the house, to whom I was known, if I could see her.

“The woman informed me that her lodger had particularly requested she might not be exposed to the curiosity of strangers; but when informed that a young lady from Mr. Otway’s had called, she readily consented to my being admitted.

“On entering the little parlour appropriated to her

use, where everything was neatly arranged, and bore few of the marks of abject poverty, I beheld a tall emaciated figure extended on a bed that was placed in one corner of the room, and as I approached, a pair of keen dark searching eyes were fixed upon my face, with an expression of such intense anxiety that I thought the woman must be one who had known me before, perhaps in happier days.

“ The result of this earnest look evidently was disappointment, and sinking back upon her pillow, she turned away her face without uttering a word. I addressed to her the common expressions of kindness and sympathy, and asked if there was anything I could do to alleviate her sufferings. She thanked me, and said there was nothing ; that her bodily sufferings were not great, and that she had pecuniary means sufficient for her wants, which would not be long.

“ I knew not what to say to her, for she spoke like one who did not belong to the station in life she now occupied, and she betrayed an evident shrinking from my presence, from my gaze, and from my inquiries, which made it difficult for me to proceed. I ventured, however, to ask a few more questions, and amongst them, whether there was any individual she wished to see, or with whom she would like to communicate through me.

“ ‘ Who are you ? ’ she asked, turning quickly on her pillow, with the hurried feverish manner which belongs to such a hectic as burned on her cheek.

“ ‘My name is Gordon,’ I replied. ‘I live at Rashleigh Park, as the companion of Miss Otway.’

“ ‘Then you see her every day,’ said the woman, ‘and know how she is.’

“ ‘I do, and am sorry to say her illness increases.’

“ ‘Illness ! Is she ill ?’ ” said the woman, starting up and leaning on her elbow, as if the better to collect her faculties of attention, that nothing I said might be lost.

“ ‘She is indeed ill,’ I continued, ‘but not yet confined to the house. She sometimes walks a little while in the garden.’

“ ‘Is she fond of flowers ?’ said the poor woman.

“ ‘I answered, ‘very,’

“ ‘You will think me foolish,’ she said, and then her voice failed her, and she drew her thin fingers over her forehead, and her pale lips quivered as she went on. ‘You will perhaps think me impertinent, as well as foolish, but if you would send me a bunch of flowers from *that* garden, gathered by *her* hand—’

“ ‘She could say no more. I promised to comply, and left the house, wondering at the importance sometimes attached to small things, and especially in seasons of illness.

“ ‘You may be sure I kept my promise ; and, thinking that if the flowers gathered by Isabel possessed so great a charm, the sweet girl herself must be an object of still greater interest, I determined if possible to conduct her to the cottage

and obtain an interview between her and the poor invalid. The village was so distant that had I proposed such a thing to Isabel, she would have thought it impossible for her to reach the spot, so I laid my scheme with some art, and first beguiled her into mounting her pony one beautiful morning, to ride over the fields with Gerald, Miss Peterson, and me by her side. On the first symptoms of fatigue, we stopped for a draught of milk at a small farm house, and here Rosa, I thought of you, as I always do when I meet with any of those specimens, of *pretension* at which you used to laugh so heartily. The eldest son of the worthy farmer came out to hold Isabel's pony, with a dogged surly look, that seemed to say,—You think yourselves great people, but I don't care for you, any more than you do for me.' The youngest was more than civil, and led us into the house with many evolutions of body, and attempts at refined enunciation, that seemed to cost him more effort than the tilling of his father's fields. It was the hour of noon, that grand climax of domestic excitement in a farm-house, and the young lady, with tresses not yet released from captivity, sat down beside us, looking as if she would have given anything for a little sheltering fringe to conceal the bloom of her expansive countenance, partly called forth by our abrupt appearance, and partly by the glow of her father's kitchen fire. This lady, as well as her youngest brother, was refined beyond

expression. I thought Gerald led her on too much to talk of poetry, and books, and things about which she would gladly have been thought to know much more than she did ; but he was properly punished by having her album brought out, and being obliged, in common politeness, to write some verses in it, accompanied by his own signature. Even Isabel smiled at his dilemma, and we both rose in haste to depart, fearing our contributions might next be called for.

“ I had told Gerald my errand to the village before we set out, and thinking to shorten the distance, we ventured upon a carriage-road, through an open space of ground resembling a park, which Miss Peterson informed us was free to the public. Finding ourselves advancing by this road very near to a large house, we turned off upon the grass in order to pass it, without the impertinence of too familiar an approach ; but, no sooner had we done this, than a loud and imperative voice called to us to stop, and, looking round, we beheld the majestic figure of a woman standing upon the parapet wall that formed a small inclosure around the aristocratic precincts of her own mansion. She held in her hand a telescope, through which her jealous eye had been examining the distant boundary of her domains, in the hope of detecting any wanderer who might deviate from the vulgar track appropriated to the common people, to tread with presumptuous feet upon her grassy lawn. What,

then, must have been her indignation, on finding that no telescope was needed to discover us; for that we had actually presented ourselves on forbidden ground within the range of her natural vision.

“ ‘Come here!’ was the imperative mandate we heard uttered, in a masculine and deep-toned voice, that well accorded with the harsh features and Herculean figure, which reminded me forcibly of a painted Britannia I have seen upon the prow of a vessel, larger than life, and ready for battling with the elements, or bearing down upon the foe.

“ Miss Peterson obeyed, and we stood at a little distance, yet within sound of the great voice, listening to an authoritative lecture upon the audacity of attempting to pass, where there was ‘no road on earth’ for common people. Poor Miss Peterson looked like a little child, as she stood pleading the former rights of the people, beneath the wall, from whence the lady thundered forth her commands that we would instantly repair to a lower path, and make our exit by a little gate, just closing upon some workmen, who were pointed out for our imitation in the right and befitting way they had chosen. Nor were we slow to obey; Miss Peterson, in high dudgeon, going first. When the precincts of the park were passed, she stopped and looked round.

“ ‘Do you know who that woman is?’ said she.

“ ‘No;’ we replied. ‘Can you tell us?’ for we

were all anxious to know from what source such uncommon majesty had been derived.

“‘Her grandfather,’ said Miss Peterson, with some contempt, ‘was a barber. Her father was a cotton-spinner, who obtained immense wealth, and, from interesting himself in the prosperity of the manufacturing town where he lived, became, I believe very justly, a favourite with the public; and, as their deputy in some public business, received from royalty the title he now bears. This lady, only one step removed from *barbarism*, having bought the property we have just encroached upon, has blocked up old roads, from time immemorial open to the public, and now assumes, in her own person, a right to domineer, and call respectable people to her feet, and send them away through any little gate, or over any rude stile, just as if they were nobody. I do abominate pretension of every kind!’ And she bustled away to the cottages of the poor, where she was always welcomed as a member of a rich and honourable family.

“Amused with the events of the morning, Isabel had been led on without being aware of her distance from home, and she readily agreed to alight, and enter with me the house where the poor woman lodged; while Miss Peterson made other calls, and Gerald took charge of the pony.

“I had said little to excite her feelings on behalf of this woman; but the circumstance of the flowers had awakened in her mind an interest which I knew

the appearance of the sufferer, haggard, and emaciated as she was, would very much increase. It was some time before we were admitted into the inner room. The woman of the house told us her lodger had been much worse the last few days, and that she thought she was not quite right in her head, for she talked to the flowers, and looked at them all day long. I had entertained the same suspicions myself, and when I saw the fixed and steady glare with which her large dark eyes, half starting from their sockets, met those of Isabel, my suspicions were confirmed. She did not speak, nor evince any other sign of recognition, as we stood beside her bed; but, as if she had gazed away her very soul in that long look, sunk back at last in a state of insensibility, so much like death, that but for the quivering of her pale lips, we should both have thought that life had passed away. Upon the coverlid of her bed lay the withered flowers, and even in this moment of apparent insensibility, some of them were still grasped in her hand. The hectic spot, however, returned to her cheek, and her eyes again opened to the light, and to the one only object she seemed capable of beholding.

“‘How long have you been ill?’ said she to Isabel, in a faint, fluttering voice.

“‘From my childhood,’ was the reply. ‘I believe my mother was often ill, and I seem to inherit her constitution.’

“‘Have you a mother?’ the woman asked wildly.

“‘No,’ replied Isabel: ‘my mother is dead. My father never mentions her, and we do not like to ask him where she died, or when. We only think of her as an angel in heaven, and when I shrink from the prospect of death, it reconciles me to the will of God to think that I shall meet her there.’

“The woman turned her face to the wall, and drew up the bed-clothes, as if to hide herself beneath.

“‘We have come,’ said Isabel, in that kind sweet voice, so peculiar to herself, ‘not to talk about me, or my concerns, but yours. We wish to know if we can assist or comfort you.’

“‘I want for nothing this world can afford,’ said the woman, faintly.

“‘I should be better pleased to learn,’ continued Isabel, ‘that you wanted none of the consolations of the world to come; for you, like me, seem to have urgent need to be fixing your thoughts upon eternity.’

“‘I am not,’ said the poor woman; and she raised her eyes, and folded her clasped hands upon her bosom, as she said reverently, “Blessed be the Father of mercies, who has offered pardon to the most abject of his creatures,—I, even I, am not without hope. But the season of approach to the grave, like that of old age, has its childishness, and its weakness, and sometimes, in the solitude of the night, I have longed for a sweet young voice, like

yours, to speak to me in the language of a cherub, encouraging me to believe that I may yet be saved. Do not ask questions of me, I intreat,—I implore it of you both, as you would not plant thorns in the pillow of a dying woman,—do not ask questions of the past; but come to me sometimes,—especially, do you, Isabel Otway, come to me, as long as strength is granted you, and if that fails before I am laid in the grave, send me sweet flowers of your own gathering,—they will soothe the bed of death. Beyond this, I have a petition more important to offer to your kindness. Sometimes call your brother to your side, and, kneeling down together, pray for me,—yes, for me, a stranger woman, poor and destitute. You will learn in heaven why you did this.'

"The sufferer had now exhausted her strength; she could say no more; but Isabel, whose feelings were deeply interested, stood watching over her in silence, as if unwilling to tear herself away from the scene.

"It was while she leaned over the bed with her profile turned towards me, that the likeness between her own face and that of the dying woman struck me so forcibly, that I have never since been able to relinquish the idea of this being the mother of Gerald and Isabel; especially as I learned from my parents, previously to my leaving home, that there is a painful mystery about her fate, of which it was thought necessary to warn me, lest I should make

the subject of her character or death one of unguarded inquiry. Subsequent events have also strengthened this impression. Isabel has been frequently at the cottage, and still persists in going, at the risk of her own health, for her strength is rapidly failing. She now prefers going alone; for I find she and the sufferer are in the habit of praying together, and she thinks the presence of a third person might interrupt the confidence she wishes to encourage. Once, and once only, I believe, the woman has alluded to certain papers, which, at her death, she wishes to be placed in the hands of Mr. Otway. Isabel proposed that her father should visit her, but the proposition was rejected with so much distress and apprehension, that she never ventured to mention the subject again.

“Isabel, herself, has no suspicion who this person is, farther than that she has been a sinner, and is now a sincere penitent. Yet, as if nature struggled in her bosom to assert its claims, she makes the situation of the sufferer, with regard to her eternal interests, the subject of her deepest solicitude. You know the romantic turn of her mind. I think it was before you left Rashleigh, that she had a sheltered spot in the village church-yard selected as the burial place of herself and her family. This spot of ground she has had cultivated and adorned, according to her peculiar taste, and here she designs that the poor woman shall find her last earthly

repose. She says, that she has come as a stranger to die amongst those who knew her not, and since their hopes are fixed upon the same everlasting rest, the same earthly home shall receive them. Alas! how soon may they be sleeping together in the grave!"

CHAPTER XVII.

ROSA BELL gave a few serious thoughts to the letter of her friend, a few sad ones to George Gordon, and then returned to the society and the amusements which had lately made the hours of her life pass rapidly away. Months rolled on, and the marriage of Arabella Falkner and her cousin was deferred from time to time, owing to some arrangements it was necessary to make in the pecuniary affairs of the heiress. She herself took no part in such things, and cared so little whether her own portion was made sure, that she would willingly have bestowed the whole sum of her possessions upon her cousin, trusting to his honour and generosity for the disposal of it, and her. Of his rectitude and good faith she entertained not the shadow of a doubt; and of his affection she was, if possible, more sure. Rosa thought her blind, and pitied her; but her pity was of that questionable character, which belongs to the act of taking from another what we know they will sorely feel the want of.—

Not that Falkner had ever professed himself attached to *her*. Charles Falkner, according to the common acceptation of the words, was an *honourable man*. Besides which, there were, in the plighted alliance with his cousin, golden charms, of whose power the governess was not aware. But he was one of those *honourable men* who can keep the letter of the law, and violate its spirit, by suffering many things to be inferred, and believed, of which they would stand acquitted in a court of justice; and Rosa Bell did both infer and believe, that while his hand was plighted to another, his heart was hers. Well had it been for her, if she had asked which of the two was most pitiable,—Arabella Falkner, or herself?

Months rolled away, and no tidings came of George Gordon, except that he had bought a tract of land in an eligible situation, and urgently pressed Peter Bell and his wife to become emigrants, and join him in his transatlantic solitude.

“And sometimes,” said Peter Bell, when writing to his daughter, “we think we should go, if we could but get the money that is owing to us out of the concern at Glossom; for you know George was like our own child, and it seems dreary falling into the vale of years without either son or daughter near us. Besides which, between you and me, Rosa, your mother is not what she used to be. Hard work and scanty means are getting the better of her. I am afraid she is breaking up, but I don’t like to notice it; because, when I do, she only

exerts herself the more, and then she can't sleep of a night. I have been thinking, and so has your mother, that now you are staying in the same house with Miss Falkner, and have doubtless made yourself known to her, and perhaps mentioned us, and the farm, you might, with that way of yours that wins upon everybody, just tell her that the farms on her estate here are rented too high,—a great deal too high; that no man can live upon them; and that your own father, who has tried it now for more than forty years, will not be able to bring half his rent next quarter, unless she will allow some abatement. Now this is a subject, Rosa, to which I desire to call your serious attention. We have done what we could for you, and this is a small thing to ask in return. But I am not reproaching you, my love. You are a good, kind girl, and I fully believe you will do this for us, without delay or hesitation."

"Poor old man!" said Rosa, with a sigh, and a smile, that wore no sign of satisfaction, "how little you can know of human nature, to suppose me capable of asking a penny, even for my father, at the hands of that woman. Poor, dear old man! I wish I could do something to serve you; but I don't see how it is possible." And she folded up the letter, and looked at the address, written as it was with a bad pen upon coarse paper, and thought how the servants at Weston must have wondered at it, as they brought it in. She then set about

making a collection of all her father's and mother's letters, in order that she might burn them ; for they did not look respectable even in her drawers, and they contained so little, it would be no sacrifice to burn them all. One packet had accompanied the Tasso, sent faithfully from Waterton by George Gordon ; and, as she took them from the cover of the book which had really not been wanted, a slip of paper, on which these verses were written, fell from the leaves.

Yes ; thou can'st say farewell ! and never
Look back, to see my gathering tears ;
It pains thee not that we must sever,
To meet no more through future years.

It pains thee not. A gentle sorrow
Just dims thy look of happiness,
Perchance to think the next bright morrow
Will find thee worth one friend the less.

It pains thee not. The cloud that saddens
A brow so free from care as thine,
Is all unlike the grief that maddens,—
The pang that rends a heart like mine.

But fare thee well. I would not grieve thee
With vain complainings of my lot ;
It is enough that I must leave thee,
And find a home where thou art not.

Rosa's heart seemed to be invulnerable that day.
She neither wept, nor pressed the verses to her lips ;

but read them a second time with a triumphant smile, that betrayed how much her vanity was gratified to find that George Gordon had loved her so well.

Nor let it be considered as a libel upon the sex, to describe a woman constituted in the ordinary manner acting so empty and worthless a part as that of Rosa Bell. Surely it is not possible by any description of hardness of heart, or absurdity of conduct, to libel human nature in its unregenerate state, when undisciplined and uninfluenced by religion. The being whose history we have thus far traced, is not a solitary instance of those who have made trial of the goodness of their own hearts, and who have found it fail them, when they least expected such a result.

One reason why Rosa had leisure for sorting out old letters, and reading home-made verses more than once, was that Falkner was gone on a temporary absence from Weston, and the society of Arabella alone, or even in company with Lady Stanley, was irksome to her in the extreme. Falkner returned, however, earlier than was expected, restoring gladness and animation to the circle he had left.

It was on this occasion that Arabella saw at last, what any one with less trust and confidence would have seen before, that the eyes of her cousin were more attracted by the beauty of another's face, than by the kind welcome of hers : and she felt this conviction as all women would. Rosa felt it too ; and

so complete was her triumph, so unquestionable the evidence of her victory, that she turned a commiserating glance to Arabella, for she could now afford to pity her.

The conversation around the table on the first day of Falkner's return was animated and entertaining, and no one was more amused than Rosa—certainly Arabella was not half so much so. Falkner was giving an account, in his most ludicrous manner, of his adventures in the way of business, in which he was no great proficient; and Rosa had been laughing heartily, when suddenly the name of Waterton was mentioned as the scene of some of his exploits.

“Really one should go into the country sometimes,” said he, “to see an aspect of the world with which neither poets nor politicians are acquainted. I have actually been where a man and woman ride together on one horse. Before I had been at the Hall at Waterton one day, I was beset when I went out to shoot, with old farmers lurking about the roads and hedges, under the ostensible plea of opening a gate, or making a breach in a fence for me: but in reality to see what manner of man I was; or if I spoke to them, to ask after their young lady, when she was coming amongst them, and (I must tell you, Arabella, as a subject for your private meditation,) whether she would be likely to take the state of the times under consideration,

and lower their rents, for it seems they are all starving.

“ But the best of all was a call I received one morning from a worthy old couple, just as I had finished my breakfast. I had seen a mass of moving matter coming slowly up the road, but whether it was man or beast, elephant or centaur, I could not tell, until it neared; and then I beheld a gaunt grey horse, with a man and woman upon its back, comfortably disposed upon their separate equipments, a saddle, and a pillion. I dare say they are very worthy people, and seem to be good economists; for the old lady wore a thread-bare great coat, that must have been moth-eaten in the ark; but she talked so fast about bad times, and rent, and quitting the farm they had tilled for forty years, that I really could not ascertain what was their precise object in coming to me. But promising to give a full statement of their case to the young landlady, as well as to take a letter to some daughter they talked about, I got rid of them at last, and finding there would be no end to this kind of persecution, quitted Waterton before the letter arrived.”

“ Miss Bell is from that neighbourhood,” said Arabella, “ perhaps she may know something about these people.”

“ Bell, Bell,” said Falkner, “ that was the name

of the worthy couple. Are they friends or relations of yours, Rosa?" he continued, looking archly in her face. "Well, now, I believe I have discovered a secret,—you blush so charmingly."

"Falkner," said Arabella with more sarcasm than she had ever been guilty of before, "you should be more considerate."

"But, do you really know these people?" asked Falkner gravely, as he began for the first time to suspect that Rosa might possibly have some distant connexion with them.

"No!" was the reply; and it was so loud, and distinct, that to her who made it, the sound seemed to fill the room, and echo from wall to wall.

The conversation soon changed, for Rosa became so grave that Falkner could find no farther entertainment in her; and besides this, a sort of darkness had fallen upon her countenance, obliterating all its beauty; like the shadow of a dense cloud upon a landscape, which the moment before had been clothed in light.

Rosa took the earliest opportunity of retiring to her own room, where a letter from Alice Gordon remained unopened upon her table; for in the excitement of the morning, it had been totally forgotten. She now broke the seal. It contained a simple detail of the domestic occurrences at Rashleigh, amongst which the most important in the consideration of the writer, were those which followed the death of the lonely woman, in

whose fate Isabel Otway had become so deeply interested.

She had lingered longer on a bed of suffering than was at first expected, and Isabel had been able to visit her to the last; but as if her own strength depended upon the stimulus of imparting consolation to the sufferer, no sooner had this call upon her attention ceased, than she sunk under her own increasing maladies.

At the time when Alice wrote, she was still a sufferer, on this side the grave; but her mind reposed in security upon the faith in which she had lived, and which she now regretted not having more adorned by the Christian graces of an active charity. She saw the evil when it was too late to be remedied, but not too late to be repented of; and sincere were the tears, and earnest the prayers, by which her repentance was attested.

A packet of sealed papers had been committed by the dying woman to the care of Alice Gordon, under the promise that she would place them in the hands of Mr. Otway immediately after her death; a promise which Alice faithfully fulfilled, and on the day following that on which they were presented, Gerald Otway was summoned to a long interview in his father's private apartment. For some days after this, Mr. Otway remained secluded from all intercourse with his family, but the communications he had made to his son were permitted to be shared with Alice Gordon, under a strict

injunction that they should on no account disturb the last hours of Isabel, with the intelligence that the forlorn and forsaken being she had been so solicitous to sustain in her passage to the grave, was her own mother.

Yet scarcely would such intelligence have been melancholy, even to her; for there was ample and consoling evidence, that the wanderer from the narrow path had been brought again to love the ways of holiness and peace,—as a sinner, had found pardon,—as a sufferer, consolation,—as a mourner, hope.

And Isabel Otway was permitted soon to join her mother, in the house appointed for all living, without ever knowing by whose side she was to be laid, or that the being who reposed so near her, amongst the flowers, and the drooping willows she had herself planted, was her, upon whose bosom she had wept away the first sorrows of existence.

Rosa Bell had read the simple record contained in the letter of her friend with too much interest to recollect her own situation, until reminded of it by the words of kindness and never-failing affection with which the letter closed. In the circumstances of her friends, she had forgot herself. Returning to the days of her childish intimacy with Alice Gordon, and of her own comparative innocence, she seemed for a moment to be walking again in the light of her own eyes, and reposing in the confidence of her own heart. What, then, were the

feelings with which she suddenly started into the awful consciousness that she had been guilty of a *lie* !

From her earliest youth, Rosa Bell had hated falsehood, and despised deceit ; partly from a principle of rectitude, carefully implanted in her mind by her father, and partly from her own fearlessness of man or woman, which rendered it no sacrifice for her to tell the truth. And now she stood alone, before the eye of Heaven, convicted of a falsehood, as decided in its character, as it was despicable and unnatural.

There are many sins, even of commission, which elude our own detection, from the indefinite or plausible aspect they assume. But a direct falsehood admits of no palliation. It stamps the page of conscience with a stain no human hand can wipe away ;—it stands in daring opposition to the nature and the will of God ; and, as it rises to the vault of heaven, seems to echo back the thunders of the rebel army, who even there defied the majesty of eternal truth.

Other attributes of the Most High, as connected with the divine nature, are, in some measure, removed from the clear understanding of man, and demand the exercise of faith, in admitting them to his entire conviction. But truth, as a principle of God's law, and an attribute of his nature, is evident to every believer, and obvious even to the least enlightened capacity.

If truth should, in any single instance, be known to fail on the part of the lawgiver, good government would be at an end. The binding covenant between the sovereign and his people would be broken, and misrule would enter into the Church of God, as it has done, in some measure, into every temporal monarchy.

But truth,—eternal and immutable truth,—is written upon every page of God's word, so clearly that a child may read and learn it there; yet, at the same time, so clothed in the majesty of prophetic revelation, that years, as they roll, are still unfolding fresh evidence, and calling up fresh witnesses, not only from the schools of divinity, but from the ranks of philosophy and science.

Truth is also an essential portion of the moral law, of which there is no separate item of good that will not bear the test of evil, and retain its own nature, unassisted by the agency of man,—working out its own benignant purposes, where it is received and cherished as a blessing; and withdrawing itself gradually, but certainly, from all admixture of evil, where it is not.

Truth is the most prominent and obvious feature of the natural world. 'True as the stars to their appointed place in the heavens,' is an appeal familiar and striking to every human heart. And not less true are the flowers of the field, and the birds of the forest, to their appointed time of return.—Not less true are the snows of winter, even where

no foot treadeth ; the tides of the ocean, where no bark is heaved to shore ; and the monthly visitations of the moon, where no eye beholdeth her beauty ;—all attesting, whether in silence or music, in simplicity or splendour, that they are regulated by a mind which knows no variableness nor shadow of turning, and restricted by a law of which no single edict can be broken.

Such is the testimony of nature, connected with that of the law and the gospel ; and never is the human heart more deeply convicted, more self-condemned, or more utterly degraded, than when it feels that the principle of truth has been violated by the act of its own deliberate and determined will.

It was not, we are free to suppose, merely from a conviction of his own ingratitude towards his Master, that Peter, when the cock crew for the third time, went out and wept bitterly ; but because the eye of that Master had beamed upon him in all the light and the glory of truth,—thus conveying to his guilty soul the just condemnation of having deserted the cause for which his Lord was about to suffer death.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ROSA Bell returned to the pleasures and the amusements which had before engaged her attention ; but she returned not the same. It was but a slight word she had spoken. Her shame and her guilt were unknown. She herself struggled to forget both, and to be as she had been before. For this purpose she assumed a kind of determined gaiety, that knew no bounds. Yet ever as she retired to her own room, or sat down to think, the picture of her parents, as they had nursed and watched over her infancy, with the record of all they had done and suffered for her since, was presented to her mind, along with the cruel and unnatural falsehood, that seemed to have let in a tide of evil to desolate her soul. For she was not now so amiable as she had been ;—her prejudices against Arabella Falkner were growing into positive dislike, and she often reproved her little pupils with a harshness of temper *that was startling even to herself.*

It sometimes crossed her mind, that the want of true religion might be the cause of all this misery ; for misery it unquestionably was, to endure the burden of life on such terms. And lost in such reflections, the young governess would sit gazing out of the school-room window, in total forgetfulness of her pupils, until the approaching sound of a gun, or the advance of Falkner's faithful dogs from the woods adjoining the park, announced the return of the sportsman from the field, and then she knew there would be one eye the brighter for her presence, and one voice more animated, as it welcomed her to the social circle.

Poor Arabella ! her prospects, her interests, and her feelings were all forgotten ; apparently forgotten by her cousin, as well as by Rosa ; and she sat the centre of a friendly and flattering group, as indifferent to their kind attentions, as if she had been surrounded by an uninhabited and barren desert. She could not for some time believe what the evidence of her senses taught her to suspect. She had never studied human nature, or calculated upon the deceitfulness of human love. Her affections, cut off in infancy from their natural hold, had centred in one object, and upon him alone the happiness or misery of her life depended. She was besides a spoiled child of fortune. She had never been crossed in her will, and to her it seemed beyond belief, that while so many devoted friends were anticipating her wishes, and ministering to her

wants, she should find it impossible to command one heart. But so it was; and she learned in time to believe it. Still it was like the phantasm of a dream, upon which she closed her eyes in the vain hope of awaking and finding it no more.

She had been seated one day by the side of Lady Stanley, and amongst her circle of visitors, listening to voices none of which conveyed the tones she wished to hear, when, after gazing for some time at Rosa as she sat at the piano with Falkner bending over her, she rose at last with an involuntary effort, and joined them. Rosa was sensible of her approach, and Falkner, with the kindness which really belonged to his nature, offered her his arm to lean upon.

In an instant her voice recovered its wonted sweetness, and she spoke with animation of the music Rosa had been playing, and asked her to play again.

Rosa appealed to Falkner for his decision upon the pieces of music spread before her, and on looking round she could not but observe the assistance he had so properly rendered to his cousin. The next moment her eye fell upon a ballad, entitled "a brother's love."

"Did you ever hear that?" said she to Arabella.

"No," was the reply, "and what is more unfortunate to me, I have never *known* a brother's love."

“ Have you not ? ” said Rosa, with an arch triumph in the expression of her eye. “ Would you like to hear it described ? ”

“ Above all things,” replied Arabella, “ for I cannot imagine it the subject of a song.”

“ Observe,” continued Rosa, “ I say nothing about *the love of a brother*. But you shall hear.” And she sang the words, giving a distinctness to the utterance of each, so that none might be lost upon her hearers.

A BROTHER'S LOVE.

There dwelt beside my father's hall,
 A youth of noble mien ;
 Who might have won a maiden's heart,
 Though cold that heart had been.
 I had no beauty to beguile
 A soul so firm as his ;
 But I had wealth,—and gold, they say,
 Can purchase earthly bliss.

He lov'd me with a brother's love ;—
 I knew there could not be
 More gentle thoughts,—more holy prayers,
 Than those he breath'd for me.
 He lov'd me,—and I saw, too well,
 What all his kindness meant ;—
 He lov'd me with a brother's love ;
 But I was not content.

“Do you understand it now?” asked Rosa, pausing after the second stanza.

“Perfectly,” was answered in a tone of voice, so low and faint, that it might have softened a heart less steeled against all good impressions. But Rosa went on :—

For I was in the world alone,
My future all so drear,—
And when he came to comfort me,
It made him more than dear.
He had a gentle voice, that told
Of blessed days to come,
And ever with his smile he brought
Sweet sunshine to my home.

We stood beside my father's grave,—
He caught the falling tear,
That should have been, more faithfully,
Shed on my father's bier.
He press'd my hand,—he should have said
Some cold, unfeeling word ;
I sigh'd,—he should have turn'd away,
And left my sighs unheard.

I was an orphan, desolate,—
I had no friend beside,
Save those he brought me, when he told
My portion as a bride.
That portion that I would have given,
With all my father's gold,
To make the love he felt for me
Less brotherly,—less cold.

He led me to the altar, where
 My dazzled eye was dim ;
 But I felt him give my hand away ;—
 It had no worth for him.
 He smil'd to see my bridal dress,
 He smil'd to see my tears ;
 He thought them but the shining dew
 An April sun-beam wears.

And now his step is in the hall,—
 That step I know so well ;
 His sunny smile is in the bower,
 Where I a matron dwell :—
 With the same voice he speaks to me
 As kindly as before ;
 He loves me with a brother's love,
 I would not ask for more.

Arabella had stood in perfect silence behind the singer, and so close to her person, that ere the last stanza was concluded, her tears were falling fast upon the neck of Rosa, who felt more convicted by this silent reproof, than she could have done by one more marked and bitter.

“Lead me to my room,” whispered Arabella to her cousin, and they both left the apartment, consigning Rosa to her own reflections, and to the pleasure of gathering together her ill chosen music, and closing the piano.

“I am a wretch !” said she, throwing herself into a chair as soon as she had reached her own chamber,—“a guilty wretch, and nothing better.

I have not openly and daringly committed any act of palpable depravity, but, like the treacherous brother of the king, I have poured poison into the ear of my victim, and undermined her peace of mind."

From these and subsequent reflections, each more galling and bitter than the last, Rosa Bell was summoned to the couch of Arabella Falkner, where she lay like one who retains the breath of life, without its elasticity or vigour.

"Rosa Bell," said Arabella, and as she spoke her face was turned away, as if with a just aversion to the object of her address; "I wish to know whether you are fully sensible of the motives and tendency of your late conduct towards me!"

Rosa disowned all consciousness of anything peculiar in her conduct, but she was quickly interrupted.

"Hush, hush!" said Arabella. "Do not add falsehood to cruelty. The most favourable feature I have observed in your character, is your love of truth. If you must continue wantonly to sport with my feelings, do it openly, and deny it not. You know better than I should like to tell you, what has been the character of your conduct towards me, since we dwelt together beneath the same roof; and I have sent for you to request that you will, before you sleep this night, lay your hand upon your heart, and ask yourself how far you have

acted upon the golden rule, of doing as you would that others should do unto you."

"I do not know," said Rosa, not without hesitation, "that I have ever intentionally injured you?"

"Tell me;" said Arabella, fixing her eyes upon her face, "do you *love* Charles Falkner?"

"No," replied Rosa, promptly and decidedly.

"But you know that *I* do?"

"Certainly."

"And yet you have tried by all the arts that woman can practice, to win his affections from me. Is this not injury designed?"

"I knew," said Rosa, "from the first that he was betrothed to you, and I had no feelings towards him, nor wished to encourage any on his part, that might interfere with this engagement."

"No," replied Arabella, "your views did not extend to a positive separation between Falkner and me, nor have I ever been apprehensive of such a result. Falkner is an honourable man; besides which, I have recommendations that you have not,—I have gold, and my cousin is poor. But how do you answer it to your conscience, that you have wished to rob me of his affections, to appropriate to yourself the treasure of my life, and leave me only a meagre title to the empty casket?"

"Rosa Bell, you have not my wealth, or my station in the world; but I have heard that you have kind parents to love and cherish you. I was left an or-

phan in early youth. My cousin Falkner stood in the capacity of protector to me, and I loved him with an affection which combined in its nature all that you and others feel for parents, kindred, and home connexions. I knew I was not beautiful, nor talented, but I pleased myself with the thought that my riches might in some measure compensate for my want of charms. Falkner I believe did love me in return, though not so exclusively as I loved him; but to the desolate orphan, whose heart neither rank nor affluence could satisfy, it was enough; and thus sustained by his affection, I feared none of the ills of life, but trusted myself to the world, with a sense of safety and protection of which you have wantonly deprived me—I say *wantonly*. It is a harsh word, but no less true. Had you loved my cousin, I could have pitied and forgiven you; but by your own confession, the part you have acted has been without that deep feeling which alone could have made it pardonable. Thus you have wantonly and wilfully injured me, and in a manner which admits of no reparation; for you cannot, if you would, restore to my possession what you have taken away.

“Of you I can have nothing therefore left to ask in reference to myself; but for the sake of your own soul, the sooner you make your peace with Heaven the better; for these are sins of a fatal and deceitful character, of which the world takes no note. In order that I may induce you to be sincere in your confessions this night, I have sent for you, and

made what you perhaps may regard as an impotent appeal to your feelings. *I shall trouble you no more.* I am ill, and your presence increases my mental and bodily distress. Good night. You have destroyed my happiness, but you have not made me an enemy. I shall not complain to others, as I have done to you."

"Good night," said Rosa, and she was turning away, when the anguish of her stricken soul burst forth in such a flood of tears, that Arabella, softened by her emotion, called to her to return.

"Are you really sorry for the past?" said she, extending her hand to Rosa, who could not answer her. "I need but a slight assurance," she continued, "for I cannot doubt the sincerity that is attested by such tears."

"I have no words to express my sorrow," said Rosa, but here, on my knees, I crave forgiveness of Heaven and you, for having acted towards you under the influence of a depravity of heart, of which I never until this moment believed myself to be guilty."

"My forgiveness," said Arabella, "is freely granted; may you as readily obtain that of Heaven. Oh! had we always been as open and candid with each other as in this wretched moment, how many days and months of misery might have been spared us!"

As she said this, her arms were extended towards Rosa, as if to offer her the embrace of a sister, and

they parted with feelings of tenderness and affection, which came, alas! too late to restore the happiness of either.

It would be in vain to follow Rosa Bell to her lonely chamber, with any hope of describing the feelings of suffering and humiliation with which she cast herself upon her bed, to think, and think again, through the long hours of a sleepless night, and to behold each moment fresh instances of depravity in herself, and enormity in her conduct, now clothed no longer in the plausible aspect it had worn, but presented to her view as even *more* selfish, heartless, and unprincipled, than it really was.

"Is it possible," she exclaimed, "that I am the same being who so lately thought myself incapable of sin! True I am uncommitted before the world; but in the sight of Heaven, have I not been guilty of ingratitude, hatred, falsehood, and cruelty; and with a sense of abject humiliation, her spirit seemed to crouch beneath the burden of its own offences, all brought home to her conviction, and concentrated in a picture of such inexpressible hideousness, that she who had once plumed herself upon her arts of pleasing, now seemed to loathe her own beauty, her grace, and her dearly bought distinction.

It was not long however before the hope of pardon, sought with tears and supplications, dawned upon the darkness of her night of penitence and grief; and though she returned again to the society her

gaiety had once enlivened, with a secret consolation founded on this hope, she returned with sadness on her brow, and silence on her lips.

Arabella Falkner, who was really ill, still kept her room, and her conscience-smitten cousin paid her all those delicate and kind attentions in which he was so well skilled, and which, whatever might be the state of his heart, had the effect in some measure of restoring the confidence of hers.

Between Rosa and himself all intimate association was suspended, as if by mutual consent. If they conversed together, it was with averted eyes; and Lady Stanley spoke to her lord in high terms of commendation, of the delicate and scrupulous line of conduct they were both observing in the absence of Arabella. Sir James *thought* it would have been well had the same line of conduct been observed before, yet in compassion to his lady's amiable governess, he forbore giving utterance to any disparaging remarks, and except for a few casual comments amongst the transient visitors at Weston, the character of Rosa Bell remained unscathed.

CHAPTER XIX.

UNHAPPY in her present situation, though almost hopeless of improving it, Rosa Bell had secretly determined to resign her occupation at Weston, and even to return home, should no other alternative be presented to her choice, when a long letter from Mrs. Gordon alarmed her with the seriousness with which it began.

"It is my painful duty," were the words that first caught her eye, and who has not read these words, with a hand that trembled as it held the page on which they were transcribed? Nor did the letter itself relieve the anxiety thus awakened. It contained a melancholy detail of facts, concisely, yet delicately described.

Peter Bell and his wife, being themselves in too much distress and trouble to be able to communicate even with their own daughter, had commissioned Mrs. Gordon to convey the painful intelligence, that the farmer, after suffering severely from the depression of the times, and finding it more and more

difficult to make up his annual rent, had at last resorted to the miserable alternative of borrowing money to relieve his present difficulties. His well known partnership in the manufactory at Glossom, had given confidence to the individual of whom he borrowed, but there had lately been rumours of an ominous nature about the character of Mr. Fynch, and the sums of money with which he had been intrusted, were suddenly called in.

Unable to meet this demand, Peter Bell had resigned himself, without an effort, to his fate, regarding it as the just and necessary consequence of his own imprudence, now deplored, when it was too late. His partner, Mr. Fynch, had privately warned him of what might take place, proposing to him that he should immediately repair to Liverpool, and take ship for America; but nothing could have been less in accordance with the character and habits of the farmer, than such a movement. He knew there was no man he had wilfully injured, and therefore, he did not fear to look any one in the face. He had been imprudent, and he was willing to submit to the consequences, be they what they might. In short, he would neither attempt to escape, nor conceal himself, nor make application for assistance; but remained upon the spot like one stupified, and as yet scarcely conscious of the magnitude and extent of his calamity.

His wife, who possessed quicker apprehensions, beheld, at one appalling view, more horrors than

necessarily belonged to their situation, and losing all her presence of mind, instead of being a help as she had formerly been to her husband, became a source of the most distressing anxiety.

Perhaps it was well for him, that he had no one to help him in his hour of trial, that he looked around upon the wide world, and saw neither means of succour, nor hope of consolation. Had he been able to find either within the range of his worldly affairs, he might, with his usual indolence, and procrastination, have satisfied himself with present things, and deferred the consideration of the future, as well as all necessary exertion, until another day. But, he was now driven off from all familiar ground, without a resting place, without a stay. His home had become a scene of desolation; his wife, in her distraction and despair, had ceased to provide even for his personal comforts, and even had she been able to do so, the direful sentence written out against him, and to which he hesitated not to surrender his person, would have deprived him of all the sources of immediate satisfaction, upon which he had been too much accustomed to rely.

The most distressing part of Mrs. Gordon's letter—that portion of it which sent the waning colour from Rosa's cheek, and paralyzed her hand, and thrilled her bosom with an agony too deep for tears, was the information that her father had been conveyed to the county jail, while her mother, *in a state of destitution*, had been kindly received

and cared for by a married sister of her own, who resided in the same town.

“ I will go to them,” said Rosa, without a moment’s hesitation ; and hastening to Lady Stanley she told her that some distressing circumstances, in her own family, demanded her immediate attention. Nor did she wait to take leave of any other member of the household, but receiving, along with many expressions of kindness and regret from Lady Stanley, the full remuneration of her slight and inefficient services, she set off on her long and lonely journey, without one lingering thought of the scenes she left behind.

It was of little consequence to Rosa, now, that the coach set her down at the door of a shop, and that uncle, aunt, and cousins, in their neat but homely and working-day apparel, flocked to receive her, all anxious to prove, not by expressions of condolence, but by quiet and delicate attentions, how deeply they sympathized in her distress.

How false would it be to assert, that association, with the common means of bodily subsistence, must of necessity produce vulgarity of manners, and degradation of mind. There are such things as moral dignity in the humblest walks of life, and true refinement of feeling, even behind the counter of a shop. It is not situation, but the manner in which the duties belonging to any particular situation are performed, that stamps the human character ; and he who luxuriates in a court may, in the tone of

his mind, and the tendency of his thoughts and conversation, be more essentially vulgar, than the man who maintains his family by the labour of his hands.

The family to which Rosa Bell was now so kindly welcomed, knew not a murmuring thought with regard to their allotment in life, the duties of which were performed with cheerfulness and energy, each bearing a part, so as to lighten the burden of the whole. They looked upon the affairs of this world as arranged by a wise and gracious Providence, and they would no more have thought of despising the humble situation in which their lot was cast, and aspiring to one that belonged more properly to another class of beings, than they would have fretted themselves because they could not transpose the elements of fire and water.

Ease and elegance, with the luxuries properly belonging to a different station in society, had never been the primary objects of their lives; but industry, integrity, and rational happiness. The punctuality with which they answered every reasonable call upon their attentions, and the excellent economy of their household, afforded them ample leisure for mental improvement; and the delicacy of feeling, propriety of behaviour, and rectitude of principle, by which their whole conduct was governed, rendered them, in their hours of leisure, as interesting companions as even Rosa Bell could desire.

“ I am convinced,” said she, in writing to her

friend, Alice Gordon, “ that I have never yet done justice to the class of people amongst whom I now esteem it a privilege to dwell. I have only been acquainted with those, who, while connected with, and supported by trade, aspired to be something higher, and thus rendered themselves both ridiculous and unhappy. But I am now beginning to look with as much respect upon the kind friends by whom I am surrounded, as if they drove me out in their carriage, or introduced me to the nobility of the neighbourhood. The secret of their happiness appears to me to consist in the absence of *pretension*. Oh, Alice! had I learned this lesson sooner, how much suffering might I have escaped. Yet my own suffering is nothing, compared with what my parents might have been spared. The bitter thought of how deeply I am implicated in bringing about their misfortunes, is one that haunts me night and day.

“ But why should I write to you in this sad strain, when hope and gladness are smiling around you. Your letter, conveying the intelligence of your expected marriage with Gerald Otway, reached me last night. There was a time when, circumstanced as I now am, I could not have rejoiced with you in your happy prospects; for I had just returned from one of the visits I pay daily to my father in his gloomy prison,—returned to find my poor mother, as she too often is, restless and unresigned; and, but for a blessed change, which I hope has been

wrought in my own heart, I do not think, as I said before, that I could have heartily rejoiced even with you. But I did rejoice, dear Alice, and that with such genuine and heartfelt gladness as I have seldom felt before; for, to tell you the whole truth, I am not near so gloomy or so much cast down, as you would suppose from my situation. I fancy one of the grounds of my cheerfulness is the unremitting exertion I am compelled to make for others. You would be surprised to see how useful a fine lady can be, when she has no other alternative; and when I reflect that it was by endeavouring to ascend step by step, towards a false elevation, to which I was not entitled, that I made shipwreck of my happiness, and brought myself to the brink of wretchedness and ruin, I am the more anxious to descend immediately, and without reluctance, to my proper level.

“But, above every other binding impulse to return to the path of duty, is the debt of gratitude I owe to the Father of mercies, who graciously roused me from the fatal dream into which I had fallen, and in which I might have slept the sleep of death.—Nothing but the actual sins of which I was guilty, particularly that of falsehood, in itself as hateful to me, as it had before been foreign to my nature, could, I believe, have convinced me of the fallacy of trusting to the innocence and integrity of my own heart, unaided by religion.

“In addition to this guilty falsehood, there is a

weight upon my conscience,—a stain upon my memory, that no tears can wash away. I have wantonly destroyed the peace of one who never injured me; and if she had, it would have been no excuse for the cruel part I have acted towards her. How just was her reproach, when she told me that I could not, if I would, restore to her possession what I had taken away. My thoughts, during the long hours of the weary night, are now often occupied in devising futile schemes for rendering her more happy. But it is all in vain, and I am compelled to acknowledge that just is the decree of Heaven, by which we are often denied the privilege of repairing the injuries we wilfully commit against our fellow-creatures.

“ You will, I am sure, dear Alice, be anxious, even at this glad season, to hear of my father and mother. Tell Mr. Gordon, and all your family, for they, too, will wish to know, that my father bears his misfortunes much better than they would expect. My first interview with him was the most painful, for he leaned his head upon my shoulder, and wept like a child; and my father, you know, is not one to yield to the common weakness of tears. It was sad, too, to see him confined in that dark, comfortless room,—him who had been used to the fresh air, and the sunshine, and the liberty of his own wide fields, and the elevation of his native hills! I could think, until I lost all my fortitude, even now, of my father in his lonely prison.

“There is reason, however, to hope that the hour of his liberation will not be far hence, and in the mean time we shall endeavour to make the best of the few comforts within our reach ; and, thanks to the noble-hearted family here! we want for nothing which their kind consideration can supply.”

Rosa Bell said truly, that her first interview with her father had been the most painful. Since then, her own unremitting and affectionate attentions had greatly soothed his feelings, and smoothed the asperities of his lot. He had expected to find her (if, indeed, she came at all to visit him in his affliction,) helpless, murmuring, and distressed ; but she appeared self-possessed, considerate, and dutiful ; and in her daily visits he could see that her character was still improving.

“Ah, Rosa!” said he once, when she told him that her own hands had prepared the meal she brought, “If you had prepared our meals sometimes at Waterton, we might possibly never have come to this.” But he had scarcely uttered the words, when, struck with their severity, he drew her towards him, laid his hand upon her head, called her his own dear child, and acknowledged it had been more his fault than hers, for bringing her up so much above her situation.

Rosa returned from this visit with a sad heart,—more sad than usual ; for the tones of her father’s voice, with his affectionate and parental manner,

had imparted to her feelings something of the tenderness of childhood ; and, with this tenderness, a chain of recollections had flowed in, accompanied with an overwhelming sense of her own unreclaimable wanderings from the path of duty. Nor was the burden of her spirit relieved by the hours she subsequently spent with her mother, who, dissatisfied and restless, did little but complain of her altered condition, continually lamenting that she had nothing to do, and then that she had nothing to do with.

Rosa had, for some time past, given up her thoughts and her time almost entirely to her parents, endeavouring, alternately with one, and then with the other, to raise their drooping spirits ; and now, at last, she began to feel as if her own would fail,—as if, in the constant supply of their lamps, her own oil had been totally expended ; nor could she find solace in any of her wonted occupations, or subjects of reflection, until after her mother had retired to rest, she had recourse to those heartfelt appeals for superhuman aid, in which the stricken soul of the mourner finds consolation when all else has failed.

Wholly absorbed by her own emotions, and the depth and fervency of her devotions, Rosa Bell had not observed that the door of the apartment, appropriated to her own and her mother's use, had been opened ; and, while she still remained in the attitude

of prayer, the gentle step of a stranger advanced a few paces towards her, and then stood still, as if arrested by the solemnity of the scene.

On rising, at last, from her knees, and looking round the dimly-lighted room, Rosa perceived with astonishment that her privacy had been invaded; but the figure of the intruder was so closely enveloped in a travelling dress, that all her attempts to identify him with either friend or acquaintance were in vain.

"I am afraid I have done wrong," said the well-known voice of George Gordon, "in thus breaking upon your lonely hours; but, dear Rosa, you must forgive me."

With these words he extended his hand, not this time to be coldly or reluctantly received.

"Is it, indeed, George Gordon?" said Rosa. "Never, never in your whole life, were you so welcome to any living creature, as you are to me at this moment."

It was unnecessary to say more. The two friends were soon all, and more to each other than they had ever been in their happiest moments. The dying embers of the fire were revived, and it was past the hour of midnight before they had told each other all, or half of what was passing in their hearts. Even then, they separated with a mutual hope of meeting again at early dawn; and when Rosa, the next day, told the glad tidings to her father in his prison, and then led in her friend, who

had been waiting for the welcome summons, Peter Bell appeared to feel, almost as sensibly as his daughter, that the only being in the world, to whom they had all been secretly looking for a consolation none dared in reality to expect, was near, and ready to assist them.

It was not merely to sympathise with the afflicted family that George Gordon had crossed the Atlantic, nor had he obeyed the impulse of his feelings by flying immediately to the scene of their sorrows. He knew that something must be done for them beyond his means to compass ; and, no sooner had the melancholy tidings reached him through his sister Alice, than he returned to his native country, in the hope of interesting in their favour some friend, whose ability to assist them was greater than his own.

Mr. Otway was the first person to whom he applied, and he had no need to extend his inquiries farther. With benevolence equal to his means, Mr. Otway needed only to have the plan of relief laid before him to embrace it with perfect cordiality, and even to esteem it a privilege to lighten the burdens of the afflicted family.

It is unnecessary to detail the circumstances by which Peter Bell regained possession of his liberty, with the stigma of bankruptcy, it is true, attached to his name ; yet, with all his private debts discharged, — with kind friends welcoming him on every hand, and with the hope of better things

awaiting him in the distant country to which he and his family were induced to direct their course,—for England, loved as their native land, they all knew, by bitter and painful experience, was no home for them. They had learned much by the past, but they had not acquired the art of subduing nature; and, therefore, they all felt their inability to fall back from their long-accustomed habits, while surrounded by the associations amongst which those habits had been formed.

Long and serious were the consultations they held upon this subject; and, at last, the case was decided, by Peter Bell simply declaring, that though he would gladly do what was best for his wife and Rosa, and should be sorry to see them living in a log-house, in the back woods of America, he felt that in England, it was impossible for him ever to hold up his head at church, or at market again.

Not another word was said, after this, against their crossing the Atlantic, especially as George Gordon assured them he had already a home of no despicable character, in which they would find a welcome shelter; nor throughout these serious discussions, with the prospect of a future before her, such as her very soul would at one time have revolted from, did one syllable of reluctance or murmuring escape from the fair lips of the young governess.

It was, therefore, agreed that they should begin the world afresh, upon a different system, and in a

distant land ; and one cheerful spring morning, Rosa Bell and George Gordon walked, arm-in-arm, to the landing-place of a large sea-port town, where a vessel, bound for New York, lay at anchor, waiting for the tide before it should leave the shore. Peter Bell and his wife Martha, had, the day before, been comfortably bestowed in the best cabin, with all their worldly goods around them ; and Rosa had only lingered on shore with her relations, in the hope of seeing Aunt Dinah, who had promised to come and bid them all farewell. It was now impossible to wait longer, as every hand was on board, and all things were in readiness for sailing ; but, just as Rosa had reached the deck, and looked round to take a last view of the crowded wharf, she saw two men jostling their way amongst the people, with a sedan, from which protruded a gay bonnet, and an anxious face, soon recognized as Aunt Dinah's, met her welcome gaze.

“ My dear girl,” said she, when the sailors at her urgent request had handed her on board, “ I have been detained on the road in the most dreadful state of apprehension, fearing I should never see any of you again ; for you must know there was no inside place in the coach ; and, as Mrs. Montague's servant was ordered to see me off, it was impossible for me to mount the roof. Then I was kept here at the inn, waiting for a coach, a fly, or anything ; for one cannot risk a gros de Naples like this in the public streets. But where is my poor brother all

this while?—for, *entre nous*, you must know I have brought him a small sum of money. It is but a trifle; yet, they tell me in those frightful woods, a little money goes a long way; and Peter, I am sure, will think nothing of its being so little, when I tell him it is all I have.”

“You had better make haste,” said George Gordon, “unless you will do us the honour to share our emigration.”

“Not for worlds!” exclaimed the spinster.—“Just tell them a lady from Mrs. Montague’s, of Remington Hall, is on board, and they will not think of sailing until I am on shore.”

With these words she hastened to the cabin, where so many objects caught her fastidious eye, and so many violations of good taste saluted her on every hand, that her feelings could find no other relief than in doleful lamentations over the cruel destiny, which consigned her relatives to so odious a conveyance over the Atlantic.

“I do not like to give this packet to your father,” said she, at last, offering it to Rosa. “He is a proud-spirited man, with all his plainness; and, though so ignorant and uncouth, I often think he holds himself even above me. Do you take it, Rosa, dear, for your own especial use: and stay,—that is well remembered,—my book of receipts. I have been thinking of all it is least likely those rude Americans should be acquainted with; and, as you will give the *ton* to American manners, you will find

great assistance from this book. Here you will find a cheap way of making white soup, vermillion dye, imitation ostrich feathers, how to take out the water spots from satin,"—and she was running on with a long list of etceteras, when the shouts of the sailors announced that the vessel was under sail with a brisk gale; and, as the first intelligence of her probable fate threw Diana into violent hysterics, it was altogether hopeless attempting to have her sent on shore.

What effect would probably be produced upon the habits and feelings of the spinster, by the liberal air of a new colony in a new world, must be left to the imagination of the reader, as well as by what process of reasoning Rosa Bell was persuaded to become the wife of an American settler. It is of far more importance to the writer to establish the fact, that all false assumption is at variance with the simplicity and dignity of the Christian character, and that *pretension* is always in danger of leading from absurdity to sin.

THE END.

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